

Stranton and Burbank Community Church

SIGNPOST



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

February 2021

Dear Friends

Over the last 10 months since the pandemic started Julie and I have done our best to get out for a walk together every day. This daily walk, along with a few other things, has helped us stay sane and healthy. We have really enjoyed stopping and observing the plants and trees as they have changed through the seasons, as well as watching and sometimes even chatting with the birds.

This morning I read Matthew Chapter 6, the part of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus says consider the flowers and birds. Jesus makes the point, in the same way that God has made the world to be beautiful and made provision for the birds, so he cares for us. There is no need to be anxious, we can trust him for the basic necessities of life.

The beginning of 2021 has proved an anxious and fearful time for many. There are real problems with the pandemic at the moment. Our public services are over stretched. Many around us do suffer the very real pain of loss, being made redundant and even concerns about food. There have also been difficult decisions to take for our churches, Church like the one outlined in Clive's letter about Burbank Community Church. Yet if we pause to reflect for a moment, perhaps going for a walk taking in a wider perspective, we can remember God, our Father, who loves us, provides for us and is faithful. He can be trusted in the present and the future.

Towards the end of Matthew 6 Jesus famously says, 'Seek first God's Kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.' I also heard in a recent sermon, 'Covid closes the door, but love opens it.' We do face uncertainty and change in the coming year. In the midst of it all let's place our faith and trust in God, investing our lives in love and seeking his kingdom. May God grant us his peace and wisdom in the present and lead us into the future.

Every blessing,

Norman

Mothers Union

Happy New Year to you all. By the time you receive this greeting it will be February and perhaps your memories of Christmas will be very different from previous ones. My eldest daughter, her husband and my three grandchildren were to join with me to celebrate Christmas here in Seaton, it was not to be! I had stocked up on the usual Yuletide food and had also received gifts for them from family and friends here. When a few days before they were due to travel here, another LOCKDOWN – much more serious than the previous ones – was enforced. Along with many other plans, all had to be changed, and planned meals consigned to the freezer. I had invites to visit two of my brothers, plus from my excellent neighbours and I settled on my middle brother's hospitality for Christmas dinner. It was quite different as they have five dogs – four Border Collies and an ancient West Highland Terrier (my dog stayed at home!). We enjoyed ourselves, but I still had to go back to a quiet house and settle down with my dog for an evening of TV. Many of you will echo this as preparations were upturned and plans came to nothing. It was still Christmas Day with the same significance as it has always had. The birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ had still taken place and we still rejoice at the great gift of deliverance that we received from and through Him.

In late November I received the news that Lorraine Richardson had died. Lorraine lived in Colwyn Road before moving to West View to live with one of her daughters. A lovely lady, she had been an MU member here at Stranton for many years and had encountered much illness in the past. She always inspired me and was always interested in what was happening in our meetings. Please remember her family at this sad time for them.

We still have no news of when we can restart our meetings. Please pray for our Branch and our Church as once again in Lockdown we are to be vigilant and careful. Remember springtime will come soon. Please keep in touch with each other and I'll let you know if I receive any MU updates. God Bless

Ann Courtenay

From the Home Front

Over the past years I really feel that after asking God to develop the gifts He has given me, He has been working in me from the inside and out to develop patience and trust – I know this is an ongoing process. Sometimes I feel as if I can't take any more of the 'trials' I am going through – but then God sends a person, or a message or a word that I hear or read and suddenly my resolve is renewed and my faith reinforced with this new knowledge of God's love and grace as he hones my requested gifts....

Some years ago I had problems with my sight and the necessary operation and unfortunate infection afterwards, caused me to lose my sight for several weeks. It was a frightening and painful time. I gradually learnt to manage moving around the house relying on other senses, completing mundane tasks etc. However as I lay in bed for days I became aware that my listening and hearing had grown in accuracy. I could hear individual birds at dawn, I picked up conversations outside plus I was more aware of 'meaning' in people's voices when they spoke. As my sight returned I became more attentive to my daily environment. Once my sight was fully restored I basked in scenery, colours and details. I recall the joy of phone calls and the feeling of thanks when Rev David Webster arrived on our doorstep to anoint me with healing oil, telling me in the middle of what he was doing he felt compelled by God to come and minister to me – wow!

When arthritis affected both my knees at the same time and walking became too painful, surgery was the only option. I so missed being able to get out and about to see places and people. But after a year containing two replacement knee ops, it was the phone calls and visits from friends which gave me the incentive to persevere with physio until I was once again mobile and independent.

I have always loved singing, but firstly the need for a throat operation prevented me, then adverse circumstances forced my withdrawal from the Music Group and of course we have not been allowed to sing in church for months in addition a recent bout of laryngitis has left me voiceless again – but I now accept that these things will pass and at some point in the future I will be able to sing praises to God again. Meanwhile I am able to enjoy more fully the singing of others – within church and recorded

During the Summer I had a problem with my ears, due to wax build up, and my hearing fell sharply, plus with people wearing masks and background noise it was difficult to follow conversations. Due to the pandemic I was unable to have my ears syringed at the Doctor's. However after four months with increasing tinnitus and headaches I paid privately for treatment. It was reassuring at this time to have texts and emails from friends and ex colleagues as a less stressful means of communication. I now, more than ever, appreciate everyday sounds – family chatter, phone conversations, the owl hooting in the night and the robin singing in the garden at dusk plus radio and television!

Time and again I have learnt to be patient and to trust in God, to allow myself to be ministered to by His earthly angels. As this process continues I am not just seeing, hearing, speaking and moving in the earthly realm but becoming more aware of God – what He is showing me, making me mindful of, telling me about, and asking me to do. Through it all I have been greatly blessed.... But it hasn't been easy!

J.A.R.

Thoughts from Mother Gemma

Dear friends,

At last, we have said goodbye to 2020, and a warm welcome to 2021. We hold the many casualties – the sick, the departed, the businesses and industries, the economy, the NHS, the education system, and so the list goes on – gently in our hearts, as we cautiously tread into 2021, with tentative hope that this year may be better.

In this Epiphany season we consider the ways Christ brings about new vision, new surprises, new hope and a new future. Our first exploration is the epiphany to the Wise Men; ‘where is the King?’ they came asking. They followed that star, allowed themselves to get swayed off course by second guessing where it would go, but made it there in the end, laying their gifts and their worship before the King of Kings.

Next, we consider the epiphany that came at the Baptism of Christ – that tearing open of the heavens, the descending of the Holy Spirit, and that Holy and audible voice of God, declaring ‘This is my Son, my beloved. With You I am well pleased’.

Then we have the epiphany of Philip and Nathanael, the epiphany at the Wedding in Cana where Our Lord performs his first miracle under the instruction of Mary (I often wonder if she’d seen him practising this one, in the kitchen, in their home...and then I wish I had the same miracle making powers!), and then we reach Candlemas, and recall the epiphany to Anna and Simeon and, in turn, to the whole Israel race, and beyond, to the Gentiles.

It’s quite the whistle-stop tour of what it means to have the living Christ, made flesh, wandering about in this world. What a difference he made to those Wise Men. What a difference he made to Herod! What a difference he made to those standing on the banks of the Jordan that day, who got to hear the very voice of the Creator. What a difference to Philip and Nathanael and the guests at the wedding (not least of all to the bride and groom). What a difference he made to Anna and Simeon who had waited so faithfully. And what a difference to Israel and then to the Gentiles. And that includes us.

What a difference the incarnation makes to us, and to those we love, and to those we live with, and to those we live alongside, and to the people in our parish, and to our guests at the Kitchen, and to the children in our schools, and to their families, and teachers. What a difference the incarnation makes to the ENTIRE WORLD.

And I wonder how much of a difference you are prepared to allow Jesus Christ to make to you and your life in this coming year?

Will you give him all of your gifts and attention and time, like the Wise Men? Will you stop to listen to the voice of the Creator and hear God tell you that you too are God’s beloved child and, in you, God is well pleased? Will you choose to actively follow Jesus, and tell others about him, like Philip did? Are you prepared to turn from your doubts and disbelief and have your faith stretched and strengthened, like Nathanael? Will you let the Christ into your wedding, your marriage, your social gatherings, and let him transform them like he transformed boring old water into the most amazing of all wines? Will you faithfully wait for him to greet you, like Anna and Simeon, and will you recognise him when he does?

And if you dare to tentatively nod, even just a delicate, yes, to any of these questions then know this: you will be changed and you will be changed forever, and for good. And the God who called you is faithful, so do not fear.

So, I’ll leave you with an excerpt from Minnie Louise Haskin’s poem and encourage you to step out, and step onwards, and invite in your own epiphanies from our God this year...

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

“Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.”

And he replied:

“Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.”

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.

And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

With love **Mother Gemma**

Reflection by Rev Michelle

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."
John 10:11

Everyone has probably had moments in their life where they wondered if they were worthy. Did they really deserve this job or this reward? When their job meant potentially uprooting their family to move across the country, were their dreams really worth the hardship it would cause their family?

Many people have wondered how much they are worth at the end of the day. Especially in today's climate where many businesses are failing and people are losing their jobs.

The Bible shows that people are worth far more than most of them realise. After all, Christ came to Earth in order to die and redeem mankind. If you ever wonder how much you are worth, remember that our beautiful Father God Himself weighed what you are worth and felt that you were worth sending His beloved son to die for you. Jesus is the Good Shepherd that John 10:11 tells us about.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

God loves us and that's that. This unfathomable love remains just as true today, because we serve a loving Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who is the same yesterday, today and always.

So if you're feeling unloved or alone remember that you are loved deeply by the one who created you. The one who knows you inside and out.

I've been talking a lot recently with people who either don't believe in God or are struggling to decipher His love in the craziness we find ourselves in. One of my friends said "Of course God loves you- you're a priest. And anyway I like my life I don't want to stop having fun"

I can't argue with the fact that I'm a priest and I feel absolutely privileged to be able to say that. But even as priests we struggle with exactly the same feelings of sadness, loneliness, grief, self doubt- we're human after all!

And as for the fun part, I can honestly say I had never truly experienced such peace and joy before I found my faith again. It's a peace and joy that somehow remains even in the saddest of times. It's a peace that allows us to walk gently through grief and sorrow, without the roots of bitterness taking a hold of our hearts.

Jesus is the good shepherd, He laid down His life so we could live. This isn't some fairy-tale or myth, as some believe. It's the true story of a love that knows no bounds.

Grace & Peace

Mich x

Birds of a Feather

I always feed my garden birds early in the morning and then take Ember (my dog) to the beach. I tend to leave the doors open in the kitchen and breakfast room whilst doing this and then close and lock them. A couple of weeks ago when returning from the beach I went into the breakfast room to get a towel to dry Ember, when I became aware of something brown streaking across the floor, just below my eye-line. Fearing it was a mouse (it's an old house!), I quickly closed the doors to the hall and the lounge. There is a half door into the kitchen – so quite a space to search. I soon realised that the 'mouse' wasn't so, but a 'robin', who must have been waiting to be fed earlier and had come looking for me. I managed to steer him to an open door and he made it out onto the back patio. When checking ten minutes later he had gone. Going out to the dustbin in the side garden later, he was back there and up to his usual bullying of me to feed him! I'm much more careful now to shut the doors when dishing out the bird food, especially when I found evidence of the robin's presence in my lounge!

My birds always lift my spirits and remind me of 'The Birds of the Field'.

Ann Courtenay



Oxford Jab Quiz

- O** Which O is a minor prophet in the Old Testament?
- X** Which saint was crucified on this shaped cross X?
- F** Which F is mentioned in the Grace?
- O** Which O is missing '___ God Reigns'?
- R** Which R was divided by Moses?
- D** Which D was a destination Saul never reached?

- J** Which J spent three days inside a large fish?
- A** Which A was strangled by his own hair?
- B** Which saint's day is on the 25th August?

Communities of Hope

To God's holy people in Hartlepool, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father!

You might recognise that greeting above, they are the (very similar) words of Paul from his letter to the Colossians and we thought they were appropriate to use as a beginning for our first message of 2021, largely because they reflect the true nature of our wonderful congregations, across the Central Group.....a holy people.

I think it's safe to say that we were all glad to see the back of 2020, whilst there are always silver linings to dark times many of us were keen to turn our back on the previous year and look forward to the brighter (we thought!) future, but here at Communities of Hope, we want to linger in 2020 just a little bit longer, the reason will become clear shortly!

Paul's letter to the Colossians was a reminder to them of where they needed to keep their eyes focused, just who it was that they should be worshipping and how that should be affecting their lives. We are humbled and privileged to be able to say that our Central Group needed no such reminder. Leading up to Christmas we had all sorts of hopes and dreams for so many of our town's vulnerable families and individuals, but as we said at the beginning, we were so aware that we could not do it alone! So we prayed, we planned and we said please. Please help us provide Christmas hampers for families, please provide toys for the town's children, please take part in our advent trail, please buy our Christmas cards, please pray with us. We asked, and we were so aware of just how much we did that! Your response, to God, to our town's most vulnerable, to us, was a resounding "yes" and we were utterly overwhelmed by your generosity. I don't think we can emphasise enough just how truly thankful we are for embracing us and walking alongside us as we negotiated the first few months of Communities of Hope. There is very much a sense of the fact that we are all in this together and we've felt the benefit of that!

Thanks to your generosity of prayer, time, gifts, food, vouchers and money we were able to reach out with hope to so many who otherwise would have struggled over Christmas and we felt upheld and encouraged by so many of you!

As we head into 2021 we're going to remember further words of Paul when he told the Colossians to make the most of every opportunity. As Covid-19 once again closes the doors of our buildings we will still seek out God's will and love and we will be doing our best to reflect that out into our community. Going forward with that, we are so aware of the need for volunteers who are people of faith that have the time and desire to work alongside us in many different capacities. Whilst we're aware that for many, lockdown wipes that out as an option, we pray that as the future unfolds new relationships will be built and flourish! We've been working hard on putting together all of the necessary paperwork (yes, paperwork is necessary, we know!) that will allow this to happen safely and well, so if you have already offered you time or services to us we'll be in touch very soon and we thank you for your gracious patience so far!

As always, we'd love to hear from you if you would like to volunteer in the future, have any ideas or suggestions or just fancy a chat, in these times of difficulty and loneliness please don't hesitate to pick up the phone!

With much love and best wishes for the coming year,

Emma, Jess & Jo

Letter from Reverend Clive Hall

Dear Stranton and Burbank Members

It was well over 2 years ago when the Burbank figures for service attendance dropped to an average of 8-12. It was during this period we had just 4 people at one service. This did lead the Burbank Leadership Team to ask the question, "What is God saying to us at this time?" "Should we be thinking about closing Burbank Church?"

What God led us to was Luke 13v6 "Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' " "Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"

So for over a year we continually prayed for God to show us fruit, we saw CREATE grow and Bridge builders continued to have an impact on the community. Clive was accepted as Ward Jackson's School Chaplain. However in the weekly Sunday worship numbers stayed low.

Last March saw church close its doors due to the lockdown and it hasn't been able to reopen. This also had an impact on CREATE and Bridge Builders and Clive's role as Chaplain.

As we reflected again on the passage above we came to the conclusion that fruit is not being seen.

So in further discussion with the Burbank Leadership Team, also meeting and discussion with Norman and prayerful discussions with the P.C.C it is with great sadness that we have decided that Burbank Community Church will not reopen. Stranton Church is still committed to the Burbank estate and the school.

A reminder here that the church is not the building, we are all God's children in His amazing family and we need to continue to pray and support one another. We would like to encourage you to be a part of Stranton Church family.

Please feel free to contact us with any thoughts or questions. We are still here for you. 01429 278504.

God bless you

Rev Clive and Ang Hall

A response from Norman:

When we took this decision at PCC each member expressed sadness that this day had come. But in making this decision we want to acknowledge and give thanks for the great work that has been done by the different members of Burbank Community Church over the years. I also want to thank personally Clive and Angela for the time energy and commitment they have given to the church community over the last 17 years.

The Burbank Community remains part of our parish and we remain committed to working in this area, with the residents, the businesses and also with Ward Jackson Church of England Primary School. Although the Sunday gathering is closing Clive remains our Community Worker for Burbank and Volunteer Chaplain at the school. We also continue to believe that some form of community expression of Church is a life-giving part of what we offer, alongside our gatherings in the Church building. Do please pray with me for God's guidance as we seek His way forward. As the pandemic restrictions draw to a close later in the year, I believe that new opportunities will emerge. To quote Isaiah, 'See I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it.' (Chapter 43v19).

A new version of Psalm 23

"The Lord is my best friend and my shepherd. I always have more than enough. He offers a resting place for me in his luxurious love. His tracks take me to an oasis of peace, the quiet brook of bliss. That's where he restores and revives my life. He opens before me pathways to God's pleasure and leads me along in his footsteps of righteousness so that I can bring honour to his name. Lord, even when your path takes me through the valley of deepest darkness, fear will never conquer me, for you already have! You remain close to me and lead me through it all the way. Your authority is my strength and my peace. The comfort of your love takes away my fear. I'll never be lonely, for you are near. You become my delicious feast even when my enemies dare to fight. You anoint me with the fragrance of your Holy Spirit; you give me all I can drink of you until my heart overflows. So why would I fear the future? For your goodness and love pursue me all the days of my life. Then afterward, when my life is through, I'll return to your glorious presence to be forever with you!"

Psalms 23:1-6 TPT

<https://www.bible.com/bible/1849/psa.23.1-6.tpt>

Ang Hall

Stranton Christmas Services 2020

Nativity - socially distanced & Covid 19 safe!

Our Nativity was very unusual this year. We used siblings to play Mary and Joseph, Angel Gabriel and Shepherd, plus Trini with two large soft toys to represent the Wise Men and Norman as the star! All were socially distanced from the narrators.



Rachel lights the Advent Candle



Tyler leads in prayer



Clive helped Pam as Narrator



Gabriel appears to Mary. Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem and Jesus is born in a stable



Lorelai signs a carol



The Angel lead shepherd to the manger



The Wise Men in the stable

Christingle celebrations

Our Christingle celebrations were a little different this year. Usually we welcome children and families from Stranton school, Eldon Grove school and Ward Jackson school into church on a Sunday afternoon a couple of weeks before Christmas. It is a joyful occasion and we enjoy hearing choirs from the three schools sing to us.

This year we had more than one celebration. The families from Church, Messy Church and Sunday Club were invited to join in an online Christingle live from The Vicarage. More than 30 Christingle packs were delivered to the families and each child joined in making their own Christingle and interacting online to talk about the meanings of the various part of the Christingle. We also sang and prayed together.

In order to reach out to the schools, Jess arranged a Christingle session for our three schools and over 300 children joined in on zoom with Christingles they had made in the classroom. This was led by Jess, Clive, Norman, Rachel and myself.

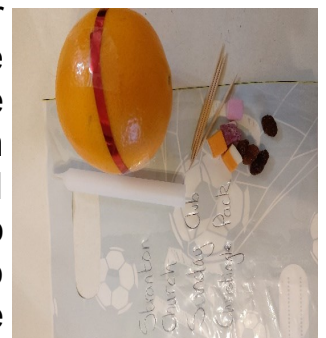
It was wonderful to be able to reach out to so many families despite being unable to meet in church.

Julie Shave



Sunday Club Christingles

Due to Covid 19 we were unfortunately unable to have our Christingle Service as usual. However, with some help from the wonderful Communities of Hope team, we created small Christingle kits for our Sunday Club children. The kits included an orange with red ribbon, a candle, 4 cocktail sticks, dolly mixtures and sultanas. I distributed these kits to our Sunday Club members and Julie also created some extras for any Messy Church children who wished to take part. On Sunday 13th December Julie kindly hosted an online Christingle service for the children to watch. The video was very well received, and the children enjoyed being able to make their own Christingles at home with some instructions from Julie. Thank you very much to Jess and Julie for their help in enabling us to have a children's Christingle service.



Kate

Stranton Sunday Club Leader

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Carol service

With all the uncertainty before Christmas it was a joy to be part of the Carol Service which took place in Stranton church on the evening of 20th December. Last year we welcomed almost 200 people into the church building and obviously it wasn't safe to do that this year, so the Carol service was streamed on Facebook with a socially distanced choir of eight people from Stranton and St Luke's.

A huge thank you to Andrew McAllister for accompanying the carols on organ and piano, to Rachel who led the service and Norman who preached and especially to Paul, Mike and Lizelke for their excellent sound and camera work.

Julie Shave

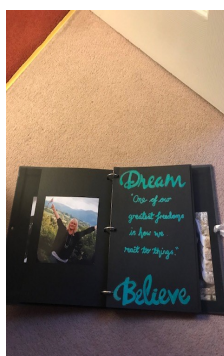


Advent Photo Challenge!

During December a photo challenge was launched. This involved taking a daily picture using a prompt word for inspiration. The daily words included: inspire, Christmas, rest and joy. I hope that anyone who took part enjoyed themselves and I am happy to announce our winner of the competition is Angela Hall. She sent some fantastic pictures of many different things that related to the daily words. So, Congratulations to Angela. Thank you to anyone who took part and also thank you to Rachel for kindly putting my daily attempt, as well as a reminder of the daily word, on to the Stranton Facebook page on a daily basis.

Below I have included some of the pictures that Angela submitted for the challenge:

Kate



Hamper Report

St Luke's and Stranton churches donated a large quantity of food items to Ward Jackson CE School just before Christmas. The donations were made up into 17 hampers and school chose the most vulnerable families who would benefit the most from them at this Christmas time.

I was asked to be the delivery man. So I went along and when I saw the size of the food bags which had been made up, I knew instantly I could not fit them all into my car in one go! It took me three trips to deliver them all...

I was just given the address of where to take each hamper. I went and knocked on the door and said I had a delivery for them. One person said – “But I have not ordered anything?” “This is a surprise delivery from the school and church. It is a little something to wish you a Merry Christmas.”

I got various remarks like:- ‘I am really made up by this’. ‘That is amazing’. ‘Wow, that is great’. ‘Really!!’ Needless to say a lot of happy and grateful people were being helped through the generosity of strangers.

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ Matt 25 v40

So, thank-you to all who donated and who planned and put this together, it was well received.

Clive



PS

As a result of your generosity I was able to take some large bags of festive and basic foods, plus Christmas gifts for 4 primary age children, to a single working mum known to me through Safe Families. She had no income in the weeks before Christmas and was not entitled to any benefits, when she had to stay at home with a child forced to isolate after Covid in his class! She was so grateful and relieved to know that Christmas would happen in her home because strangers cared

J.A.R.

Sunday Club Christmas Presents

This Christmas the Stranton Sunday Club created gift bags for all its members. Twelve gift bags were made up and delivered to the children. Each gift bag contained a card, colouring bookmark, Christian jotterpad and a tube of sweets. All of the children who received these gift bags were very grateful and excited to open them. A big thank you to Mary for donating the gift bags and Christmas cards. The Christmas cards were from the Communities of Hope Team.

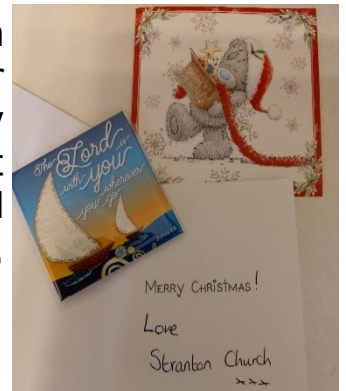


Kate
Stranton Sunday Club Leader

Christmas Presents

The pastoral team alongside other members of the church delivered 50 Christmas cards with gifts to members of our church, as well as some of our asylum seekers, supported by the pastoral team during these uncertain times. Each gift included a card, Christian fridge magnet, bookmark and booklet. A huge thanks to Rohan, Diana, Steph, Ian, Angela, David and Jean for delivering these before Christmas.

Kate



Sunday Club News!

Sadly, due to the Covid 19 lockdown Sunday Club has been unable to return, however I have some good news. Starting the 17th January at 2pm I have created online Sunday Club videos that will be on the Stranton Facebook page as well as the Church Website. For the next few weeks, I will be reading a bible story, talking a little bit about it and then suggesting a couple of fun activities that you could try at home. So far, the activities have included making a rain cloud in a jar and then making a collage of the world. I hope that all of the children enjoy this small version of Sunday club. The videos will be available on Sunday afternoons and will be running until the 21st February. There is a possibility that I will create more videos after this date but that depends on what is happening with Church opening etc.

Kate

Stranton Sunday Club Leader

Sunday Club online:

<https://www.facebook.com/strantonsundayclub> , which will also be posted on the Website <http://www.stranton-church.org.uk/sundayclub.html>



Boys Brigade News



Tier 4 and Worse - unfortunately the Covid 19 situation now means we have to stop meeting until we can get back into a Tier 3 or lower.... fortunately we have an alternate plan - we are going to develop a booklet for each section member to complete - so that we keep in contact with our membership.

Pre Christmas

We were able to meet after the November lockdown to have a night of fun Christmas Activities – it was great to see the Boys again.

The **Anchor Boys** made Stars for our display in the church porch, we had devotions and we played balloon games, followed by some Christmas treats!

The **Juniors** made Crowns for the Church display, we had devotions, followed by a snowball fight with special indoor snowballs (from Wilko's - highly recommended) this was extremely popular!!! This was followed by some Christmas treats!

The **Company Lads** wrapped selection boxes, which were then donated to the Community of Hope Christmas Hamper appeal, followed by some Christmas treats!

Once 'We Have Won Against Covid 19' or 'The Future Plans' (Yes it will happen!!)

We are going to create a games track in the car park at St Matthew's Community Centre, which will give ourselves and other groups additional benefits during the Summer months. Plus, a long term plan, we hope to hold a Fayre (probably at Christmas).

In the meantime keep safe and if you would like to know any more about Boys Brigade check out our Facebook page

George Bainbridge

Answers to Oxford Quiz

O	Which O is a minor prophet in the Old Testament?	Obadiah
X	Which saint was crucified on this shaped cross X?	Saint Andrew
F	Which F is mentioned in the Grace?	Fellowship
O	Which O is missing in '___ God Reigns'	Our
R	Which R was divided by Moses?	Red Sea
D	Which D was a destination Saul never reached?	Damascus
J	Which J spent three days inside a large fish?	Jonah
A	Which A was strangled by his own hair?	Absalom
B	Which saint's day is on the 25th August?	Saint Bartholomew

0781*****29



Every time I go to the service on a Sunday
I must give this little mobile phone number.
I now need to know it off by heart
If you want to be here when the service does start
So every week without fail it's 0781*****29.
Although of course it's my service provider
Who offers me an individual direct prayer line.
All I have to do is charge a battery of faith
Then I'm insured for a heavenly place.
Furthermore, I know if my life is a mess
I can find help and comfort in a Holy text.

George Bainbridge

BALANCE SHEET OF LIFE

The most destructive habitWorry
The greatest joy Giving
The greatest loss Loss of Self-respect
The most satisfying work Helping Others
The ugliest personality trait Selfishness
The greatest "shot in the arm" Encouragement
The greatest problem to overcome Fear
The most effective sleeping pill Peace of Mind
The most crippling failure disease Excuses
The most powerful force in life Love
The most dangerous act A Gossip
The world's most incredible computer The Brain
The worst thing to be without Hope
The deadliest weapon The Tongue
The two most power-filled words "I Can"
The greatest asset Faith
The most worthless emotion Self-pity
The most beautiful attire Smile!
The most prized possession Integrity
The most powerful channel of communication .. Prayer
The most contagious spirit Enthusiasm

LIFE ends, when you stop DREAMING. HOPE ends, when
you stop BELIEVING. LOVE ends, when you stop CARING.
So, please share this BALANCE SHEET OF LIFE.
FRIENDSHIP ends when you stop SHARING.

Words from God

What lies are you listening to?

At the start of this New Year God wants to give you hope!

The dreams that He has placed on your heart He now wants to birth. Don't let a pandemic stop you! Don't let the devil's lies put barriers in your way.

When you hear the lies - speak God's word ...

I'm too old "Behold I am doing a new thing have you not perceived it?" Isaiah 43:19. Sarah was 90 when she had her first child!!

It will cost too much..... "My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory." Phil 4:19

It's too scary..... "For I the Lord your God will hold your right hand saying to you "Fear not I will help you"." Isaiah 41:13

What if I fail?..... "With God all things are possible". Matt 19:26

What will others think? "man looks on the outer appearance, God looks on the heart." Sam 16:7

I'm not very good with words.... Moses said the same thing and God replies "Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." Exodus 4:12 NIV

God created the world in 6 days He made a man out of dust! That's the same God who lives in you!!

Dream BIG dreams, then put them into action!

Ang Hall



Alphabet of Gardening tips

I was given a little book of gardening tips “Green fingers and dirty nails”, when I was in New Zealand, which I thought I would share with you over the coming months - J.A.R.

C

Cuttings – if you do not have any hormone powder, dip the stalk in honey before potting.

Put cuttings next to their ‘mother plant’

Give carnation cuttings a good start by dipping them into icing sugar before planting.

Cuttings do well if placed in a solution of sugar and water at least a week before planting.

Chopsticks make good markers or stakes for small plants

Cyclamen like to be watered from the top with lukewarm water and need plenty of air but no direct sunshine.

Camellias love tea leaves.

Caterpillars hate mint.

Compost is very important. Use kitchen waste, old newspapers, grass clippings.

Charcoal helps to keep soil sweet for all indoor plants.

When planting in containers use blood and bone and peat.

Catnip deters ants, aphids & chewing beetles



Planting Your Spring Garden

For The Garden of Your Daily Living

Plant Three Rows of peas

1. Peace of Mind
2. Peace of Heart
3. Peace of Soul

Plant Four Rows of Squash

1. Squash Gossip
2. Squash Indifference
3. Squash Grumbling
4. Squash Selfishness

Plant Four Rows of Lettuce

1. Lettuce Be Faithful
2. Lettuce Be Kind
3. Lettuce Be Patient
4. Lettuce Really Love One Another

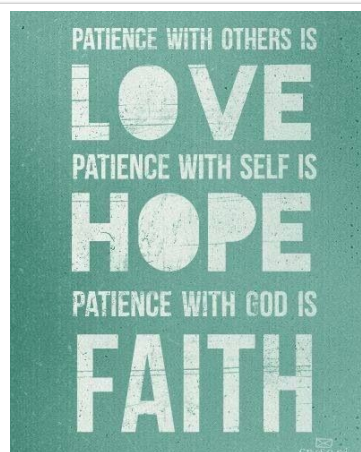
No Garden is Complete Without Turnips

1. Turnip For Meetings
2. Turnip For Service
3. Turnip To Help One Another

To Conclude Our Garden We Must Have Thyme

1. Thyme For Each Other
2. Thyme For Family
3. Thyme For Friends

**Water Freely With Patience And Cultivate With Love.
There Is Much Fruit In Your Garden Because You Reap
What You Sow. Pass It On!!!**



Anzac biscuits – the power and spirit of an everyday national icon

How many of us are collectors of holiday memorabilia? My cupboard and shelves are full of them and not only from this country. The “craze” is perpetuated from our visits down under to Australia.

The first stop on reaching any destination seems to be for us, the Tourist Information Centre. Some of these are located in the most unusual places. For example in Bega (NSW) it is in the Cheese Factory Shop, and when, having surveyed and scoured the shelves and racks for relevant brochures it is a mere stone’s throw to walk through into the café, where untold and almost unimagined sweet delights and cheeses await.

One of the most fascinating books which I came across tells the history, and much more, of the **ANZAC** biscuit. Written by Allison Reynolds, a culinary historian, who co-incidentally was born and brought up in the village of Sutton Veny near Warmister in Wiltshire. She subsequently emigrated with her family to South Australia.

The Sutton Veny connection is interesting inasmuch as Australian and New Zealand troops (**ANZACS**) were billeted there. Many soldiers were sent to a number of camps around the country to recuperate from their war injuries sustained at Gallipoli and in France during the First World War. Sadly, many never recovered and died and others were struck down with the Spanish Flu during the epidemic of 1918.

These soldiers and also some medical staff were interred in the churchyard of St John the Evangelist at Sutton Veny and in the churchyard of Codford St Mary. Travellers on the A36 will see the Australian Imperial Forces (AIF) badge cut into the chalk hillside near the main road.

So, what is an ANZAC biscuit? Much historical research has gone into this topic but seemingly with no absolute clear cut answer, but many variations. It is clear however that the basic ingredients are OATS, BUTTER, FLOUR and GOLDEN SYRUP, and sometimes COCONUT.

The other variations are in the mixing, baking and finishing of the product; these vary according to the traditions of those early settlers from which ever part of the “old country” they originated.

Suffice to say that this book is not just another recipe book for ANZAC biscuits and the like, such as PARKIN and FLAPJACKS but nearly 150 pages of fascinating facts and even myths about these dearly loved creations and their place in Antipodean Folk Lore covering the whole range of the history of **ANZAC** biscuits. With chapter headings such as “**Jaw Breakers**”, “**Crispy versus Chewy**” and “**Keeping the ANZAC spirit alive**”, there are hours of endless dipping to look forward to.

Jeff Parsons

(PS - When I visited Australia last year, my old College friend Sue, now living in Perth, brought me a gift of homemade Anzac biscuits when we first met up – they were extremely moreish! **J.A.R.**)

CELEBRATE!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

to

February

Caitlin Bruce
Lewis Boyd
Angela Craig
Alex Craig
Charlotte Gleeson
Alan Harkness
Jeni Hart
Peter Hart
Jaydon Lithgo
Duncan Playfor
Jess Playfor
Jacqui Rogers
Sue Rumney
Connor Scott
Zac Spoors
Ian Taylor
Luke Tones
Gill Siddons



Congratulations to

**Anubha and Gehan Wanduragala
on their marriage on December 30th 2020**

Would you like a celebrations' mention (birthday or anniversary, or special event such a retirement, birth, exam success or graduation)) for someone you know in our church family or yourself? Just email/ring Trish in The Office or myself (energy.education@btconnect.com / 01429 265527) to be included.

**If you have something to celebrate we would love to share it - email
admin@stranton-church.org.uk
or phone 864006.**

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

ANZAC Biscuits

- 1 cup plain flour
- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup coconut
- 125g unsalted butter
- 2 tbs golden syrup
- 1 tbs water
- 1/2 tsp bicarbonate of soda

Sift the flour into a bowl. Add the sugar, rolled oats and coconut. Melt the butter in a saucepan, then add golden syrup and water. Stir the bicarbonate of soda into the liquid mixture.

Add the liquid to the dry ingredients and mix thoroughly.

Place walnut-sized balls of mixture on a greased tray and bake at 175C for 15-20 minutes.

Biscuits will harden when cool.

Scripture Cake

Recipe

1/2lb Judges 5 v 25
1/2lb Jeremiah 6 v 20
1 Tablespoon 1 Samuel 14 v 25
3 Jeremiah 17 v 24
1/2lb 1 Samuel 30 v 12
1/2lb Nahum 3 v 12
(or 1/2lb 2 Chronicles 31 v 5 (margin)
2oz Numbers 17 v 8
1lb 1 Kings 4 v 22
1 teaspoon 2 Chronicles 9 v 9
Pinch Leviticus 2 v 13
1 Tablespoon Amos 4 v 5
3 Tablespoons Judges 4 v 19

Use advice given in Proverbs 23 v 14 - result a cream.

To numbers 1,2 and 3 add 4 one at a time, still taking Solomon's advice.

Then 5,6 and 7 and previously mixed 8,9,10 and 11 together add these to the mixture and lastly add 12.

Bake in a slow oven for 1 and 1/2 hours

DIOCESAN LENT COURSE – RACIAL JUSTICE

Michelle is planning to use the diocesan Lent course exploring issues of Racial Justice. Dates and times to follow soon.

Prayers on Wednesday: The zoom Prayer Room at 3pm on Wednesdays started in January. You can join in with others in a time of prayer. There will be links for these meetings on Zoom and if you'd like to join in please contact Mother Gemma at revdgemma@gmail.com

The Prayer Course

Norman and Clive are planning to run 'The Prayer Course' using zoom. This 8 session course will be on Wednesdays at 7.30pm on zoom. We will start on Wednesday 3rd February finishing on the Wednesday before Easter. For background to the course we recommend the book 'How to Pray' by Pete Greig. If you are interested in being part of this course please contact Julia or Trish.

Sundays and weekdays through February*

9.00-10.00am	Stranton Church open for private prayer
9.15am	Holy Communion streamed from home on St Luke's Facebook Page
11.00am	Morning Service streamed from Stranton Church, on Stranton Facebook Page

*We will reopen for public worship as soon as it is safe to do so

On line services continue each day on Facebook

All are welcome to join Morning Prayer, 8.30am Mon-Friday on zoom, for more information contact the Church office or one of the clergy.

Who's Who

Church Office	St Matthew's Community Centre Arncliffe Gardens TS26 9JF
Administrator	Trish Playfor "Tues- Fri, 9.00 to 11.00am" 07305 550009 E-Mail: admin@stranton-church.org.uk Web Site: www.stranton-church.org.uk

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E-Mail: nshave1@btinternet.com

Curate

Revd Michelle Delves 40 Browning Avenue 723461

Burbank Community Church Worker & Curate

Revd Clive Hall 10 Clarkson Court 278504

Readers

Mary Tones 40a Blakelock Road 265625

Churches Together in Hartlepool

Secretary Susan Atkinson,
St Mary's RC

Church Wardens	Peter Anderson 22 Thetford Road 871266 Angela Craig 57 Claremont Drive 234279
Music Group	Julie Shave 34A Westbourne Road 233609
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	Peter Anderson 22 Thetford Road 871266
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.

