

ALL SAINTS, STRANTON CHURCH HARTLEPOOL

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2014



*God's light on a hill
in the heart of the
town*

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REPORT FOR APCM 2014

Norman Shave (Priest in Charge and chair of PCC) April 2014

Stranton: A Church family seeking God's Kingdom by looking up, reaching out and growing together

Over the last year Julie and I feel we have begun to put down roots here in Hartlepool. A major achievement for us was 'taming the garden' in the new vicarage. This proved to be very hard and we are very grateful to those who helped us as we dug up unwanted tree stumps, relocated plants, prepared soil and eventually seeded a lawn with a number of surrounding borders. The result is that we now have green grass and a variety of plants around the garden. The process takes time but it was well worth it. The process of becoming a minister in a new parish and finding the best way forward also takes time. Julie and I have always felt we are in the right place but as time has passed I think we as a church are now in a place where we can continue to move forward.

Elsewhere in the report you can find details of a whole variety of events and activities that are part of our broader church life. During the year there have been 31 baptisms, 2 thanksgivings, 15 weddings and members of the clergy have officiated at a total of 35 funerals. The major festivals remain high points of the church's year. We attracted a total of 185 people to our services at Easter, 882 to services or events in Advent, and 278 people over Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. During the summer months we are grateful to the small number of volunteers who open the church for visitors on Tuesday afternoons and Saturday mornings. As well as being an important service to the community this helps us meet the requirements set by the grant received from English Heritage when the south wall was rebuilt and may help us in similar grant applications in the future.

As a church we seek to reach up to God. Personal prayer, bible study and regular Sunday worship in three congregations remain the bed rock of this. It is tremendous that many folk continue to make a variety of contributions to this part of our work. We also continue to grow together in love and fellowship. Home groups are a vital part of this ministry. One home group asked to meet with me early in 2014. This led to introducing a termly 'welcome lunch'. The pastoral team and the ad hoc group that came together under Rob Butler's leadership to decorate the house in Browning Avenue are two further great examples working together. There are many examples of reaching out: our involvement at Ward Jackson School, the commitment to the Food Bank, the growth in Messy church and St Matthew's Community Centre are all examples of this. One thing to give thanks for is the completion of the St Matthew's roofing project. Our thanks go to Barbara Butcher, Carole Laud and Diana Wanduragala all of whom played a significant role in making this happen. This was funded by a grant of £42,576 from Modegran who distribute funds on behalf of Niramax. Looking to the future we hope a further grant will improve both the lighting and the floor in the large hall.

Another significant part of our ministry is a whole variety of work with families, Youth and children. This area of work has recently been named as one of the diocesan priorities. We have groups that meet on Sundays and groups that meet through the week, uniformed organisations and non-uniformed organisations and groups for all ages from babes in arms to those who are 17 and 18. Sustaining these groups takes immense amounts of time and energy, thank you to all who help lead these groups in any way. Our thanks go to Ian Taylor who stepped down as YF leader at Christmas.

In last year's report I noted that we faced a number of transitions in the staff team. The great thing now is that these transitions are largely over. I am sure we all give thanks to God for bringing together a gifted team who are growing into their roles and responsibilities alongside the many lay folk who contribute to the life of the church. Nick and Bekah Moore arrived in June and are now

living in the diocesan house in Browning Avenue. They both bring significant gifts and have taken on responsibilities from a very early stage. Nick, as curate, now coordinates home groups and co-leads the Youth Fellowship while Bekah has led the Bubbles group in Sunday club since September. They also together arranged a family fireworks party at St Matthew's in November.

Perhaps the greatest surprise is that Clive and Angela Hall are still here ministering amongst us. By September after several job applications it seemed as if God was calling Clive and the family to remain here in Hartlepool. In parallel to this I had worked with the SMDT and PCC to consider what job we might advertise were Clive to leave. This process resulted in Clive taking on a revised job description and he now has responsibility for supporting the 40 or so volunteers who work with children and young people across our church as well as leading Burbank Community Church and acting as Burbank Community worker. Clive is taking his new responsibilities seriously and he has sought to meet with many of the key volunteers. He has also prepared a spread sheet to track the training needs of the volunteers and ensure safeguarding is implemented.

Angela's one year contract as coordinator of the YFC Gap year team came to an end in August but Mike Taylor the YFC director encouraged her to continue working with YFC. A number of folk from the church helped provide funding for Angela to take on a wider role within YFC as a pastor and mentor to the large number of gap year volunteers across Teesside. This role means Angela continues to support the Hartlepool team and she remains a real blessing in this role. Angela is currently working with Mike Taylor and the Tees Valley YFC board to develop a proposed long term way forward for this work. We are also grateful that Angela also uses her many gifts working alongside Clive in Burbank and for her continued involvement at Ward Jackson Church of England School as chair of Governors. We hope that the house in Arncliffe Gardens will be sold in the coming months and that we will be able to provide a more suitable house for the Hall family. We are also grateful to Stephen Bell and Jess Woody our gap year workers who completed their work in July, and it has been great to welcome Jill O'Dell and Daniel Greer who have been working amongst us since September. A note of thanks is also due to the many folk who host the many volunteers, whether they are here for a week or a year.

Another surprise came in the summer when we were asked by the St Matthew's Centre committee to expand Trish's role. Trish our church administrator now also acts as the St Matthew's booking secretary alongside her other roles. It is really helpful to have an administrative presence in the St Matthew's and this role enables to share a small amount of our office costs. It has been great to welcome Andrew Craig back in his role as associate minister. Andrew makes a significant contribution to our worship, visits a number of folk regularly and he now coordinates the prayer diary. Our relative abundance of ordained ministers means Andrew does help provide ministry in other local parishes when there is a need. Sarah Jay has continued to lead the pastoral team with great wisdom and sensitivity. The pressure of Sarah's work means she has had less time in the parish this year. She will complete her three year training period in the summer and we anticipate at that stage she will move to another parish closer to home.

The above is only a snap shot of all that has happened in the last year. The formal accounts demonstrate that we have been able to fund all the work of the parish. Most of the funding comes from the giving of church members and parishioners. In June and July we carried out a funding campaign with some very positive results with both increases in sustained giving and some one off gifts. This has put us on a reasonable financial footing. The funds have been used to pay for ministry through the payment of parish share, salaries (including Clive's increased responsibilities) and expenses. We have continued to maintain our buildings. We have continued to support the work of

mission both at home, particularly in a support of YFC and abroad with contributions to CMS and Cross Links. Looking forward we remain committed to investing in the mission and ministry of God's church in Stranton Parish while supporting our partners in mission where we can. During the year as mentioned above we intend to consolidate our housing stock in order to provide an improved house for Clive and Angela. We are also looking to improve the church lighting in the near future and will need to seek funding for this as and when the plans are agreed. . I give thanks to God for each person who generously gives that which they are able allowing the ministry here to flourish. In the early part of 2015 we have begun a process seeking God's vision for us as a church. 'Stranton 2020 Vision' began with a sermon series affirming our identity as the body of Christ and our mission to love God with our heart mind soul and strength, love our neighbour as ourselves, make disciples and proclaim God's Kingdom. This has laid the foundation for whatever comes next. We have been invited by Bishop Paul to join a process called 'Partnership for Missional Church' which is a three year programme that begins in the autumn. This process is founded on prayer and biblical reflection and encourages us to take our context and our call to mission seriously. It encourages involvement in our community, greater lay participation and deepening discipleship. However this process will involve significant challenge and change as we seek to discover God's preferred future for our church community. A decision to engage in this process is therefore highly significant and will be taken by the new PCC in May. Whatever the decision we make we will continue to be a Church family that seeks God's Kingdom by looking up, reaching out and growing together.

Finally I would like to thank our two church wardens Alan and Kath, David our treasurer, Maureen our secretary and Assistant treasurer, the PCC and the SMDT for all the hard work they have put in this year. After two years Alan's circumstances have changed and he feels the time is right to stand down as church warden. We wish him well in his retirement as warden and from the NHS as he hopes to spend quite a bit of time training surgeons in the developing world over the next year. I conclude with a prayer as we look to the future in hope, faith and love:

A Prayer for God's Vision

Living Lord God,
We your people want to bring glory to your name
and walk in your ways.
We ask you to pour out your Holy Spirit upon us.
Grant us discernment as we seek your vision.
Grant us patience to listen both to your voice
and to one another.
Grant us faith and courage
to travel with you wherever you lead.
Help us to grow as your followers
and to seek your kingdom.
We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

Norman Shave March 2015

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

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

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

PCC members who have served from 1st January 2013 until the date this report was approved are:

Priest in Charge: The Rev'd Norman Shave Chairman

Wardens: Mrs Kathy Webster
 Mr Alan Robertson Lay chair

Representatives on the Deanery Synod:
 Miss Pamela Harkness
 Mr Andrew Rogers
 Mrs Sylvia Shepherd

Elected members:
 Mrs Maureen Anderson Secretary
 Mrs Faith Barton
 Mrs Barbara Busby
 Mrs Angela Craig
 Mr David Craig Treasurer
 Mr Frank Endean
 Mrs Diane Greenwood
 Mrs Jeni Hart
 Mrs Cheryl Mills
 Mrs Lynda Parvin
 Mr M Peacock (from ACPM 2014 – 27.04.14)
 Miss Mary Robinson
 Mrs Jacqui Rogers

Ex-officio members:
 Rev'd Andrew Craig
 Rev'd Sarah Jay
 Rev'd Nick Moore

Co-opted members:
 Mr Clive Hall

The full PCC met seven times during the year with an average level of attendance of 72%. Committees met between meetings and minutes of their deliberations were received by the full PCC and discussed where necessary.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

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

ELECTORAL ROLL

There are 135 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll, parish. Two named were added during the year and 7 were removed.

FINANCE REPORT

Please see pages 3 and 4 - Report from Priest in Charge.

The accounts were adopted by the PCC on 24th March 2015 subject to any minor adjustments picked up by the internal examiner.

BUILDING AND FABRIC OF THE CHURCH

Main issues this year:

- 1) Lightning Conductor Replacement:
Further to vandalism to & theft of lead from the conductor on the west end of the church. Decision made to replace it and bring it down to be earthed, in a secure part (fenced area) of the church building (North side). Faculty agreement and work has now been carried out.
- 2) Roof Repair with Masterform:
Again after theft of an extensive area of Lead from the South roof. Initially temporary repairs carried out whilst a faculty / Diocesan & Insurance decision was made for its more permanent repair using a non-lead substitute. This has been agreed and now permanent repairs have been carried out using Masterform replacement.
- 3) 41 Arncliffe Gardens:
This accommodation has been rented for several years now. It has gradually deteriorated over the years. Prolonged discussion took place as to whether it should be extensively upgraded and repaired; and then sold. It was felt that the church would be unlikely to afford the necessary repairs / upgrade and would therefore never recoup any expenditure. Valuations have been carried out, agreement has also taken place with the Diocese, as the house was designated as the Curates House for the Parish and should be considered as part of any such future development / investment.
It has been valued at approx. £99,500.00 and an appropriate agent has been approached for its sale.
- 4) 161 Burbank Street:
At present accommodation for Clive and Angela and family. This is to be evaluated and discussion with C and A, re-an alternative new property to be entered into, in association with / after the sale of Arncliffe Gardens property.
- 5) 'Peal Board' replacement:
In bell tower room needs repair. Ongoing.

6) Sound System, (microphone & loop systems):

An ongoing discussion. Sound speaker replaced / upgraded to improve the sound (private donation). Loop system repair / replacement is still ongoing.

Further discussions between Norman & Tony Atkinson re-the system we have, are ongoing.

7) Internal Lighting Project:

Ongoing discussion about future upgrading / replacement / costing, etc.

A Log Book is kept and all alterations, additions and repairs to the church are entered. A complete inspection of all articles belonging to the church has been carried out.

Alan Robertson Churchwarden

HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

A verbal report will be given at the meeting.

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

The Deanery Synod continues to be the focal point of inter church discussion within the Anglican community in Hartlepool. During the past year there have been a number of interesting and thought provoking presentations, including ones by the Lindisfarne Community and the Hartlepool Credit Union.

The Credit Union was particularly challenging as the organisation prefers to known as a community bank; lending money at reasonable rates of interest, not solely to those in financial difficulties, but also loans are available to the general public. We were challenged to try to ensure that each parish opened an account. What's also noteworthy is that they have a shop in Avenue Road selling white goods at competitive (or even below market) prices. We were all encouraged to investigate this worthy organisation further.

The Deanery Synod stills struggles to find an identity as the hub of Anglican outreach. Many parishes still tend to think merely within their own parish, rather than actively seeking cooperative activities across parish boundaries. However, 'twas always thus and no doubt it'll continue in the future.

In July there is to be a social event (more of which anon, later in the year) and there was also a deanery away day at Shepherd's Dene; enjoyed by those who attended.

Naturally, the thorny issue of the Parish Share Offering is always high on the agenda and we continue to search for ways to encourage even more generous giving from those who can't pay or those who won't

Andrew Rogers

SAFEGUARDING - CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION

This year has seen the implementation of the new safeguarding policy, with a successful safeguarding training event with the diocesan safeguarding officer in November 2014 and revamped consent forms sent out in September which takes account of particular changes in the policy, including parental consent for young people to be contacted via social media. Clive Hall is

ensuring all youth and children's workers who missed this training attend an alternative date. No safeguarding issues have been reported this year.

Peter Hart

GATHERED WORSHIP IN STRANTON PARISH

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

Stranton Church

Sundays

8:30	Holy Communion	A quiet said service using traditional liturgy (organ and Hymns monthly)
10:30	Morning Worship (provision for all ages)	Each Sunday has a different characteristic. Generally the services are relaxed and welcoming including a mix of contemporary music and hymns. 1 st and 3 rd Sundays include communion 4 th Sunday, Lighthouse is a good service to try if you are new to church, it includes welcomes for families wanting baptism.

Ward Jackson Church of England Primary School

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

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

10:00	Holy Communion	A said midweek communion in a more accessible venue.
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WORSHIP TEAM

We experienced considerable problems with the PA system over the summer of 2014. One of the main issues was resolved with the replacement of the main speakers, which had lost most of the high frequency output. My thanks to Mike for his help in this matter. In our investigation it was disappointing to discover the hearing loop system is wired from the main speakers, so the loop and main sound cannot be mixed independently, as they should be. The mixer has the capability, but a new hearing-loop amplifier will be needed as at the moment the sound or loop is compromised.

We have enjoyed work together as instrumentalists and singers, and we feel we have made progress and are gaining confidence. I am grateful to all the team for their commitment and enthusiasm to worship. Hannah has become integrated into the group, and we value her creativity; and Melanie has made excellent progress with her recorder.

Many thanks to the congregation especially for your willingness to engage with new music. We are always open to new members, new gifts, and new instruments. Younger members would be particularly welcome. We meet on Thursday evenings.

Thanks too to Mark on the mixing desk, and Rachel and Mallory for keeping the words right on the screen.

Kevin Tones

CHOIR

The choir continues to sing at Communion services, robing on the third Sunday in the month, and at some weddings and special occasions. We have worked well together with the music group preparing for occasions such as Carol Services. We are diminished in numbers and would greatly appreciate new members - if we could be seen more this might help.

Our thanks to Kevin, and to Jack Hanlon who accompanies us on the organ, and on occasions the sax and piano.

The Choir

PRAYER MINISTRIES

Although there is a place in nearly every service for intercessions and a rota of people to lead them, there is a great deal more than that both in scope and the commitment we have as a church community to practice prayer publicly and encourage private prayer. In fact prayer underpins everything else that we do as a church.

Most weeks (i.e. except at certain holiday times), there is a half hour service of Morning Prayer at 8:45 on Monday – Thursday mornings, including reading a psalm and other readings from the Bible. This service is a “legal” requirement for clergy, but everybody else is welcome to take part as well, this providing a daily structure for praying together.

Monthly prayer and praise meetings provide a context in which to pray together in a more informal setting. Home groups, including one group that seeks specifically to pray for the Church, provide space to pray with just a few other people in a friend's home.

There have been opportunities to try other forms of prayer. On a few special occasions (such as half days of prayer and, in more abbreviated style, Holy Week meditations), we have tried meditative readings of scripture loosely based on the ancient practice of *Lectio Divina*. A group of people meets on most alternate Sunday afternoons to explore Contemplative Prayer. Ask Angela Craig or Pat Vaughan if you are interested.

This next year we hope to extend the practice of offering prayers for people after Sunday worship, for confession, healing or renewal. Have a word with one of the clergy if you would like be involved.

“The prayer of faith will save the sick . . . anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another . . . The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.” James 5:15-16

Andrew Craig

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER GROUP

This is a small group which meets on a Sunday afternoon a couple of times a month. The group is primarily a listening group. We are following a course structure (Christian Life and Community) and have learnt several ways of listening to God in silent meditation of scripture; just allowing ourselves to rest in God and be open to His leading. We then share what the Lord is saying to each of us and support each other. It is a very gentle affirming group and it is leading us into a deeper spiritual relationship with God.

'If anyone is interested in a group like this please talk with Angela Craig or Elspeth Craig'

Angela Craig

BURBANK ANNUAL REPORT

Burbank Community Church

I described at a staff meeting the other day, that I feel church is going through a winter period at the moment. A couple of deaths and people moving away and then the loss of a few regular attenders have seen numbers go down. Whilst discussing this with another minister in the town he said he felt his own church was “walking through treacle at the moment!” This image seems to fit for me also!!

We had a really good Labyrinth again this year but it was set up at Oxford Road Baptist Church. One comment was “5 minutes into walking round I felt nothing, then I walked into the Prayer room. I felt warmth all over me and the presence of God that I have not felt in a long time” This day is always a reminder we need to stop more often and draw aside to meet with God!

I am grateful that we have a good team of people that are taking over leading and preaching more often, now that I have been taking more services at Stranton Church.

Ward Jackson School

This year has seen the arrival of a new Deputy Head who is a Christian. He has settled in well and Jan (Head Teacher) sees him as a real asset to the school. Mary Robinson has also now been added to the rota of leading 'Worship' (Assemblies) along with Norman, Angela and I.

I felt I needed to free up some time to be able to fulfil the new role at Stranton Church so I stood down as Governor. The school is in great hands and I am confident will continue to be a positive influence to many lives.

Angela and I are going to start an Emotion Wellbeing, 4 week work shop for the teachers at the end of March.

Community Work

This has been affected by all the financial cut backs organisations are going through. The police stopped the Neighbourhood Watch meetings, Housing organisations did not give funds to our group to rent an office this year and the Havelock Centre need to increase the rent by 200%. So now meeting in someone's home, but probably will draw to a close eventually.

We did get a little funding to help paint 4 Murals and put in plants when Nate and his team were here last year. But, a neighbour has let her dogs dig all the plants up, including 5 trees!!

Foodbank

We have just had our AGM and also underwent an Audit inspection from the Trussell Trust. We got a glowing report from Trussell and at our AGM we got a new Trustee, Laura Wild, the Chaplin at St Hild's School.

We do think we are going to be needed for a few more years yet so we are looking at how to develop further and how to keep improving our service. We have had First Aid training and Safeguard Training given by Peter Hart. Plus, a Listening course by Angela Hall and a lady from Hartlepool Borough Council came and spoke about Signposting. We have got a few more volunteers recently so it all feels very positive at the moment.

Pizza & Prayer

The numbers for this have dropped off dramatically since Christmas. Peter and Jeni both have become very busy and they feel it is time to close this group down. I would like to add that YF, which runs on a Sunday, is still attracting large numbers.

Bridge Builders – This year we have continued with a steady number of about 14. The annual trip to watch Hartlepool play football became memorable for the fact it was one of the coldest days of the year. Even the leaders were frozen! This group is run by YFC team with support from Angela or myself and they do a great job throughout the year.

Personal News

This time last year I said I felt God was telling me to move on and I was actively looking for a new job! It did become a stressful time for both the family and me. Then, after a trip to a monastery and a lot of insight from the Father who was leading my days, I did reach a point where God said I wanted you to think you were leaving so that things would change for you in Hartlepool. So I did take on the new roll of Overseer for Youth, Children and Family work. We have settled down to continue the work in Hartlepool and I am no longer looking to move, although church is looking to rehouse us which would be beneficial for the family.

I have started to visit leaders and groups within the church and have come across a number of issues during these visits. Things like Leaders leaving for University or retiring. There has not been anyone to develop joint events like a picnic and games day, which would of course help with more

of a sense of unity across the groups. These are some of the things I will hope to develop in the near future.

So to close I would like to thank everyone for all their support and prayers that you have shown us over the last year. We look forward to seeing what God will do next!

*Kind Regards
Clive Hall*

STRANTON TODDLER GROUP

The Toddler group continues to be very popular in St Matthews Hall on both Tuesday and Friday mornings, drawing in many families from the local community. The children enjoy small toys, puzzles and crafts in the small hall and particularly the space in the large hall where they have fun on bikes, scooters, slides and see-saws etc. Parents, grandparents and child-minders look forward to meeting one another and playing with their children, encouraging them to share with one another to learn new skills.

I am very grateful to those who come to help me on a Tuesday, both in the setting up and the preparing and serving of snacks. Due to the large numbers who come, this is a big commitment but a great way of serving our local community and making links with a lot of local families.

Julie Shave

MESSY CHURCH

Messy Church continues meets monthly on the third Sunday from 4-5.30 pm in St Matthew's Hall. It continues to thrive, regularly drawing 12 or so families (20-30 children) each time. Some of these are baptism families and others are drawn in through other contacts: Toddlers etc.

We begin our sessions with table top games and colouring, and once everyone has arrived, we have a bible story, song and prayer. Then the children choose from the 6 crafts/games linked with the theme, enjoying as many as they can fit into the 30-40 minutes available.

After this we enjoy tea together where there is more time to chat with each other. It's great to see whole families learning, playing and eating together. Many of the families have been coming for some time which means our friendship with them is growing and giving us more opportunities to get alongside them and share our faith.

We are very grateful to Jeni Hart who has played a major part in Messy Church over recent years, and has now stepped down to focus on the tea shop. It has been great to welcome Bekah, Jill and Daniel to the team. They have brought inspiration to our planning and energy and enthusiasm to the sessions. We continue to give thanks for the ladies who prepare and serve our tea each time.

It is a privilege to share the love of God and our prayer is that many, both adults and children, will come to faith.

Julie Shave

SUNDAY CLUBS

Bubbles began in July 2014 and is for pre-school children at Stranton church and runs every Sunday except for Lighthouse services.

We begin with some praising God through singing and then we have our "Wiggles" song so we can sit down and listen to our Bible story and pray together before doing a related craft activity. We are following the Scripture Union Bubbles material which uses the same Bible passage as the older groups.

Bubbles is a very happy group and we regularly have five children. We have outgrown the choir vestry and are exploring ways the group can grow and be more attractive to visitors.

Bekah Moore

This year has seen the Sunday Club split into two groups.

The younger age group, 4-10yr olds, have been meeting in the Fulthorpe Chapel, using the Extreme and Splash material, tailored to their needs. As the numbers of this group have been up and down this year, some changes are coming into place after Easter, involving the Bubbles group, ran by Bekah.

The children in school years 6 & above meet in the Vicars Vestry. The first term this year saw the group cover the story of Moses, resulting in a pyramid of their learning, which they showed to the whole church family. Since Christmas we have looked at the Body of Christ along with topics of choice from the children – The First Miracle, Wisdom & Love (Valentines weekend) to date. There are six regular attenders in this group, though numbers can fluctuate.

Jill, our American for the year (YFC gap year student) has been helping with both groups – thanks Jill. Thanks must also go to Barbara, Mary, Pam, Gill, Steph, George, Chloe & Kate, for everybody's dedicated work this year

Lynda Parvin

MATT'S MATES

Matts Mates meets weekly on a Thursday during term time from 3.20-5.00. Our aim is to provide a group where primary school children can be part of the church, learning about how God wants us to live as we spend time together.

We have a team of three church members Barbara Busby, Mel Hutchinson and Diana Wanduragala and two members of the gap year team, Jill and Daniel. We really appreciate the work Jill and Daniel do. They have been excellent role models and teachers and developed good relationships with the children.

At the moment we have about 14 children attending the sessions aged between 4 and 10.

Each time we meet we have a bible story, games and a snack. We sometimes have a craft activity or singing. We have used the outdoor area during some of our sessions and the children enjoy being able to play outside. Our latest topic has been "Bible Children" and we have learnt about children in the old and New Testament week by week since Christmas.

Barbara Busby

BEFREE

Our leadership team is very much the same with Mary, Angus, Mat and Elliott, along with Daniel from the YFC team. We have really enjoyed having Daniel this year, he has been a great asset to our team and has fit in effortlessly.

We started the year with relatively low numbers as we said goodbye to some of our older members who have moved up to YF. However, recently it has been great that a number of our young people have brought along friends and even better that they have come back the following week. We are currently a male heavy group which means we spend much of the evening running around playing football, rounders' and dodge ball with the odd circle game thrown in and we always finish with a game of ninja lead by our oldest boy (a future great leader in the making).

We have always been honest at Befree with the fact that we are not very bible heavy. We aim to teach our Christian values through our actions as good role models and pray that through our strong relationships with the youth that we can encourage them to develop their own faith. Daniel has been doing a great job at sharing some of the message each week and encouraging prayer as a group.

Over the next few months Befree is set to see a number of changes as the current leadership team step down and hopefully another team will come in place. In September we see Mat head off to university and Angus enter his final year of his accountancy apprenticeship, therefore as a team we feel like it is a good time to hand the group over to a new set of leaders. We ask for your prayers as new leaders are found and begin preparations into taking over the group, along with prayers for the young people themselves that they will continue in September.

Mary Robinson



This year has been a good year for YF (Youth Fellowship). We have seen great growth in the young people and a deepening commitment to their faith and an eagerness to share that faith with others in person and on their blogs and social media. They show a great level of enthusiasm and we have a solid core group. Prayer requests are ongoing and encouraging as they share their walk with leaders and each other.

This year we have looked at missions at home and abroad and how to show Jesus in your life where you are at. We looked at self-confidence by growing in God and sharing God with confidence. Prayer and using the Lord's Prayer how we should pray. Worship and spent a great night worshipping in different ways. We have looked at knowing God, his character. The last two sessions have been about Easter and interesting facts they may not have known to get them to look at Easter more.

Next term we are covering some of the big questions that get asked such as has science buried God? and, How could God allow suffering? As several young people are looking into baptism and confirmation we are covering what is baptism? Baptizing babies or believers? and, look forward to some of YF getting baptised or confirmed. Then a bible overview covering Creation, the Fall, Redemption and New Creation.

We went back to the Jonas centre for four days to enjoy fellowship and learn about it. One of the best things we have been told by the youth about this time is that you can focus on God without distraction and be in a supportive atmosphere without life's business to concentrate and spend time with him. They also enjoyed walks by the river, camp fires and visiting the ice cream shop. Fund raising was suggested by the youth to keep the cost down and was done well by selling off services such as car washing and gardening.

We have enjoyed doing more things with other youth groups such as collaborative youth events with Oxford Road Church. We have done two so far this year and YF have led these services and enjoyed chilling out afterwards with other young people who know God. There are another two of these planned for next term and a trip to Refresh in Eaglescliffe.

There has been a lot of leadership changes this year with the stepping down of Ian and Mat. We are grateful for their leadership and pray for blessings on their futures. Nick joining the team has been great as he fits so well into YF and some excellently led sessions by Chloe, Jordan and Mark. Daniel and Jill our Americans are as always a great encouragement and a vital part of the leadership team.

Thank You for your continued support and prayers

The YF Leadership Team

YFC GAP YEAR STUDENTS

The new team arrived this past September and have settled in perfectly. We've all done a really good job of meshing well together as well as playing off each other's strengths and weaknesses. Our schedules are roughly the same as last year, going into Dyke House Secondary on a Wednesday and Stranton Primary on a Thursday. The staff have remembered us, although I was a bit hard to recognize since I've cut off all my hair, and they have welcomed us back. We've tried to keep contact with St. Hild's School by being as involved as we can be. At the beginning of the year we would sit in on classes and try to help offer feedback or a point of view from a Christian standpoint as well as help the teachers out in whichever way we could. Then the students had to start taking their mock GCSE's so the school thought we would be a bit of a distraction if we continued going there so they have since pulled us out. However, at the beginning of January, we were given an opportunity to come back in after school to help out in some after school activities. We are doing our best to keep that relationship going in hopes that they will allow to come back during regular school hours.

We have also gotten into a new school since the beginning of the year called Catcote Academy. A visitor came to my church and told me about it and said I should pop in to see what it is like. So the team and I went in to have a look and we ended up meeting with the head teacher there and he was more than happy to have us in. It's a special needs school so the students all have learning disabilities. They are some of the nicest, friendliest, and happiest students we've met so far in

Hartlepool! We go in at noon to eat lunch with them, then we go out on the playground to hang out with them before we go sit in on their classes.

We all enjoy our Tuesdays very much. Bethany and I have started a new youth club for secondary students at Owton Manor called 7up. We are trying to get the students to have a relationship with Jesus because they come to the church on a Thursday night to help out with a youth club but that one particularly is for younger students. So we started this one in hopes that we could shine some light about who Jesus is and have them feel free to ask whatever questions they want about the subject. Like I said earlier, we go into Dyke House Wednesdays. We sit in on an R.E. class for one of the lessons and try and offer some input. It is with the same teacher we were with last year and she said that because of our presence and our input in her classroom, some students were more open to the possibility of going to a church. At lunch time, we all have a student eat with us that we are trying to mentor. Lately we have been trying to work on some of their social skills to help them interact with other students easier. We've also just completed a listening course with Angela Hall in the schools new Sixth Form they've recently added this year. By the looks of it, the students' thoroughly enjoyed it.

Thursdays we still go into Stranton Primary at lunch time to eat with the students and when we walk in there we feel like the biggest rock stars. Everybody wants you to sit with them or give them a hi-five and it is truly one of the greatest feelings. All of us have a student we mentor for the last half hour that we are there so it is always fun having little chats with our student. Every now and again we'll pick up a random assembly so the team will go into the school and share a bit about us and what we're here for. Usually every term we try and do a Talent & Testimony night where we'll invite all our youth groups together and share stories and have students perform. It is great to see the boldness of the students getting up on stage where they can feel vulnerable and have them sing their hearts out. It has been great seeing the transformation of some of them because this year we have let students tell their testimony instead of just having the YFC people doing it. But all in all, this year has been going great and we are looking forward to see where the Lord takes us in these relationships we are creating.

Stephen Merkey, March 2015



We continue to welcome our maximum number of Rainbows every week for a varied programme of activities.

Just now, most of our girls are 5 years old and so we are going to re-visit one of our favourite challenge badges - "We're Going on a Bear Hunt" and we would appreciate donations of new shoe boxes please, as part of this challenge.

We also need a new adult leader who is willing to take the Lead Guider role. We would be staying as team members, if we are wanted, but need a new adult willing and able to take on the lead role - something that Girl Guiding UK say that I can only do for another couple of years before I am to old!

Meanwhile, we will continue to grow our unit but it will close by this time next year if we are unsuccessful in finding a new leader.

Christine Robinson



Brownies

It has been another busy year. Our numbers have fluctuated during the year but as a whole are up on last year. The pack has been involved in activities outside the hall – swimming, Summerhill, visit to Stranton Church where they listened to information about the church and they used the hand bells. The badges covered along with numerous crafts, games and singing were House Safety and Craft. During this year we Celebrated 100yrs of Brownies with lots of events at Division and County level. We finished the Celebrations in September ‘doing the Conga’ along Seaton front, finishing off the night with chips.

Guides

The Guides have been skating at Billingham, been to Summerhill and out for meals. They also visit Stranton to have the experience of ringing the bells (thanks to Barbara Busby & Andrew Frost). They completed the Confectioners (very messy and sticky) and Craft Badges during the year.

Brownies & Guides have had joint events for Thinking Day Celebrations in the hall and with the Division at Throston School. Sandcastle building on the beach with chips after!

The evenings pass with much laughter and sometimes singing. Both The Guides and Brownies are struggling for Leaders, due to changes in their work patterns and have gone to university. Are there any Adults who would be willing to help out, by being at the meeting as an additional adult! It would not be every week but would link with the work commitments of the leaders. Please get in contact with me.

Cheryl Mills

(Guiders for Brownies & Guides)



Boys Brigade

All 18 Leaders discussed and reviewed our Child Protection rules in September (Copies sent to Mrs B Busby and Mrs B Butcher)

Anchor Boys - Our numbers are increasing to 10 plus but we still have room for up to 18 Boys

Juniors - Our Numbers are slightly down with 12 -14 being our average attendance - but we have a large number of year 6 boys ready for the company in the Summer.

Company - we average around 12 lads plus we have several young leaders 21 and under.

Activities have included, ice skating, badminton, crafts, games, National competitions, swimming, football, hockey, Badge work, table tennis, bell ringing and lots more.

Camp - we are holding our Camp/Holiday in July at Barrasford (an old railway station) and so far 9 lads have booked their places. The camp will be run by Mr J Hanlon

We have bought a new **Company Colour** - our first for 43 years and now incorporate them in our Opening Ceremony.

Our **Open Night** is on Friday 24th April - with the Rev N Moore as our special guest.

St. Matthew's - we are represented on the Hall Committee.

Mixing in with Stranton - the company appreciates the support we receive from the congregation and we have introduced Bacon Butty Sunday's for the Lighthouse service for all the congregation and members to enjoy.

Staff and senior NCO's are now encouraged to attend a service at least once a month.

Around 6 members ring bells on a regular basis

As ever with BB work there is always more to do which we strive to do on a weekly basis with leaders offering enthusiasm and encouragement to each member

George Bainbridge, Leader in Charge, 4th Hartlepool Boys Brigade

COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

The inaugural meeting of the Communications Group was set up and held in August 2014.

The full members of the Communications Group are:

Mike Peacock – chair	Jacqui Rogers
Faith Barton	Sylvia Shepherd
Diane Greenwood	Peter Hart
Lynda Parvin	Melanie Lee

The meeting discussed the Group's Objects and Principal Aims; the churches web site and use of FB, Twitter and other social media. The following were proposed:

Objects – to promote good communication across the church communities by providing or assisting in the provision of appropriate guidance, help, and support for associated groups and individuals aiming to spread awareness of church events, services and other happenings within our communities and the general public.

Principal aims – to revive, review and continuously improve the communications framework for the church communities with the aim of increasing church membership and extending the reach of God's love.

Scope – All Saint's Stranton and Burbank Community churches

These are at 'draft' and need peer review before being offered for PCC approval. Ultimately, they will subsumed into our Communication Strategy and Communication Plan, yet to be produced.

Facebook is set up and has now been running for the past 6 months.

Minor work has been carried out on the web site to correct errors, ensure service details and group information is accurate too. Future areas for improvements include the general look and feel of the web site, and to simplify the menu structure.

For many reasons it has been difficult to agree a consensus for a date/venue for the next meeting. Currently, this is scheduled for week commencing 20 April 2015.

We're always open to new ideas and thoughts from anyone outside of the group about how we can improve the churches' communication and reach into the community.

Mike Peacock
April 2015

PASTORAL GROUP

During the last year we have been delighted to welcome two new members to the pastoral team. Following excellent training in listening by Angela Hall they are now fully engaged in helping us in our aim of supporting the church to build open, trusting relationships.

The main focus of the team has been to visit those in the church community who are unable to get to Church and the increase in members has enabled the group to visit more people and to take communion to those who want to receive it. Regular meetings and a referral process have enabled the group to ensure that, as far as we are able, all who need or would like a visit receive one.

We recently reported back to SMDT on the progress we had made in the last year seeking their views on how the work of the group should develop.

I am very grateful to the group for all their hard work and commitment and for the time they give and the care they show to the congregation

Sarah Jay

MOTHERS` UNION REPORT

In October 1913 there was an inaugural meeting of the first branch of M.U. in Stranton and another in St. Matthews. 76 ladies attended and in the following March another 56 became probationers. Out of four branches in the town at that time we are the only one surviving.

Unfortunately moving with the times we only have 17 members, small in number but faithful to the cause of the M.U. Janet Short died after many years a member of Stranton. Meeting once a month we have a variety of subjects with speakers taking us on travels to the Inca Trail, the Orient Express and the fjord of Norway. We look to our Christian roots with a Lady Day Service, Advent thoughts and a moving visit by Chris (an ordinand) at the time.

We support Diocesan events such as the Festival Service, I.M.P.C. service, Council and All Committee days. Having visits from the Vice President and a Diocesan Officer encourages members and hears what is happening at national level.

We appreciate support from the church when holding a soup lunch and strawberry tea which enables us to send funds for various projects. Some members are not very active but gifts were given to the Women's Refuge at Christmas, trauma teddies knitted for use in the visitors centre in Durham prisons also toilet bags for the hospital.

We hope to have a celebration in the autumn for 100 years of M.U. at Stranton and look forward to 2015 when M.U. in Durham Diocese will be 125 years.

Kathy Webster
Branch Leader

HOME GROUPS

In a church of our size across three Sunday congregations, home groups are an essential part of our church life. They provide opportunity for stronger fellowship, deeper discipleship, and closer pastoral care. We each need the help of other Christians to know and love God better. The closer we are to one another and to Jesus, the more attractive the gospel will be to others. In other words, our home groups are key to our mission and outreach. We currently have seven groups meeting at different times on a weekly or fortnightly basis. Over the winter Norman Shave and Rachel Wilson ran a Start group, going over the foundations of the gospel; we would love to see a group like this running at least once each year. We hope in the coming months to see another one or two permanent groups established, including one for younger adults. It only remains for me to express huge thanks to all of you who, under God, run and host these groups.

Nick Moore

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN HARTLEPOOL

I would say that things have been changing within the churches of Hartlepool. A few years ago most of the organising and delivery of projects was done mainly within the Town Centre Churches together group. But now we have a town wide Enabling Group which has taken on this role. Not only taken on this role but developed it.

There has been for a long time a breakfast club for the homeless in the town. But there is now a Foodbank run by a churches together committee, plus a Street Pastors group working from the Elim church.

I have often heard in public council meetings lots of praise for all of these projects.

We still have an 8:00am prayer meeting twice a month to make sure we continue to cover the work in Prayer. Plus a Thursday prayer meeting once a month.

There are also committees meeting where we plan and discuss the future of church together. These meetings have also increased in number of people attending and also in the number of church being represented at the meetings.

I am very encouraged by the strength and the amount of work that is being done by churches together in Hartlepool.

Clive Hall

BELLRINGING REPORT

Recruitment and teaching

This year most of our new ringers are young people from Stranton, especially the Boys Brigade. We have a very welcoming and supportive team who give each other lots of encouragement and make new ringers feel very welcome.

This year has been a year of consolidation. Many ringers have improved bell control and listening skills but we are still mainly ringing rounds, call changes and plain hunt. It will take us some time to develop the skills to move on to change ringing on more bells or different methods. We continue to have support with teaching from other ringers who visit us on our practice nights.

Ringling for Sunday Service

Ringling to call people to worship on Sundays is the priority for any local band of ringers. We are ringling on alternate Sundays at Stranton and St Adan's. It would be great if we could establish weekly ringling at both towers over the next year.

Involvement in the Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Association of Church Bellringers

We continue to benefit from the support of the association, with many members attending meetings and receiving encouragement and support from more experienced ringers.

Bell maintenance

The bells, frame and fittings here at Stranton are all in working condition. The bell frame will need cleaning and painting within the next two or three years but no major maintenance tasks are planned in the next year.

Barbara Busby

Stranton Tower Captain

ST MATTHEW'S COMMUNITY CENTRE ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT

The Committee are pleased to report that the last year has brought continued improvement to the building and to the administration of the Centre.

The roof of the main hall and East end has been completely re-roofed with new slates and waterproof membrane. This, as mentioned in last year's report, was funded by a grant from Niramax. Additional costs for the removal of the rotten structure on top of the main roof & other minor work required was met by St Matthew's funds.

Following the above work, the whole of the ceiling and walls were professionally cleaned because of all the debris from the re-roofing as well as accumulated dust from the past hundred years!

One of the boilers had to be replaced this past year and major maintenance on the radiators in the main hall has been carried out. Some work on these is still to be completed - including the replacement of one of the radiators.

Again, St Matthew's covered the cost of both the above items. However, our financial position is stable, despite these expenses.

Our next major project is the replacement of the lighting in the two halls with new wiring, switches and energy efficient lights. This is a much-needed project as all the lighting & wiring is more than thirty years old. Again, we have had an offer of funding for this from Niramax to enable us to do this.

In addition, they have included renovation of the wooden floor, (sanding and re-sealing), in the grant offer. Seeking quotations for this work is being carried out. Without funding of this sort, it would be impossible to carry out these big up-grading and maintenance costs. The Committee is very grateful to Niramax for their invaluable support for this community asset.

The administration of the hall has been greatly improved this year with the employment of Trish Playfor since September, as our bookings secretary. She has proved a great asset to the Centre and bookings have increased steadily. We thank her for her work and for joining the Committee.

My thanks, too, to all the St Matthew's Committee members for their hard work and commitment over the past year. Also thanks are due to our three ward councillors, Ged Hall (a committee member) Jonathan Brash and John Lauderdale, for their support over the past year.

We hope the local community and our church will continue to benefit from the facilities at St Matthew's Community Centre in the coming years.

Diana Wanduragala

St Matthew's Community Centre Management Committee