

# ALL SAINTS, STRANTON CHURCH HARTLEPOOL

## ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2020



Rooted in God's love,  
Growing together with Jesus,  
Branching out in the power of the Spirit.

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## Vicar's Report for Stranton Church 2020 (May 2021)

*'Remain in me, and I will remain in you' John 15:4*

2020 will go down as one of the most challenging years we have ever known. The Coronavirus pandemic had challenges for the world, our country, our community and of course our church. The year has brought a time of constant change and challenge with much uncertainty and yet God has been faithful and the people of our church community have pressed on in love, prayer and fellowship, and have adapted and grown.

At the end of March all gathered church services were stopped as part of the lockdown in response to the pandemic. Our group of churches and each parish responded quickly to the challenges. Michelle was the first to take a Stranton Sunday service online on Mothering Sunday 22 March, and Mother Gemma was the first to take weekday services on line using Facebook live: but fairly quickly as a group we were providing not only regular streamed Sunday worship in a variety of styles but also daily services including morning communions, afternoon reflections and night prayer. After a few weeks we also began using zoom initially for a few meetings but then weekday morning prayer. Between ten and fifteen people now attend these prayers from across the group and town. It's a tribute to the gifts and talents of many in our group that we were able to continue the daily streaming pattern well into 2021 until people started to return to Church. Thank you to all who contributed to our services in this time.

At the beginning of the pandemic we also became very aware of those who were unable to access the on line worship and, in the very strange times, the danger of isolation. To stay in contact the weekly notice sheet was distributed to everyone with whom we had contact, either by email or by hand. Thank you to David and Ian who have done the bulk of distribution during this time. Telephone calls across the congregation were also encouraged, some have at times given small gifts for example flowers at Mothering Sunday and Easter eggs. These little things have made a real difference and enabled us to stay in touch.

At Stranton we reopened for worship in August and even when the lock down was repeated later in the year we continued to stream our Sunday services from church. We now have a broadband link in our church building and have invested in video equipment to improve the streaming from church. The equipment, supplemented with some borrowed microphones from English Martyrs School, was used to produce a very effective on-line carol service. It remains a challenge both to produce good visuals and sound but Paul and the team do an amazing job at our 11am services.

Alongside other buildings St Matthew's Community Centre was forced to close in March. The members of the committee have done an amazing job at making the premises safe and seeking to open as and when it has been possible. Thank you in particular to Carol Laud in keeping things safe. In the summer the probation service committed to using the building for a whole day once a week which has been a real boost to funds in a lean period. The office base for Communities of Hope Hartlepool also opened there in September. The Centre will be in a good position to move forward as the rules are progressively eased in 2021. A particular thank you goes to Barbara Butcher who stood down from the Committee towards the end of 2020. Barbara has been a stalwart servant for many years, raising funds, keeping the accounts, and ensuring the Centre is the well maintained building it is today.

During the year the work to improve accessibility in the church including a new toilet and hospitality area in the former vicar's vestry was completed. The financial report is elsewhere but this work was facilitated by a generous bequest from Margaret Lumley's estate. We also began a project to

replace the temporary screens which represent a considerable health and safety risk with something more permanent. The funds are available for this project and we hope this will be completed in 2021. Thinking more generally about finance I want to thank everyone who has continued to give generously through 2020. Where many churches have really struggled we have benefitted from many people continuing to give through a variety of means, most notably the Parish Giving Scheme. Thank you too to David Craig, Maureen Anderson, Ken and Sylvia Shepherd and the members of the counting team all of whom have continued to help in very trying circumstances.

Over several years we have been working with Rev David Tomlinson to secure funding for a church growth project funded by the Strategic Development Fund (SDF). As the bid developed it became known as 'Communities of Hope' with a focus on outreach to families, children and the more marginalised in our town. This bid was successful and as a result we have been able to employ three staff: a project leader, a family and children's worker and a community evangelist from September 2020. Stranton Parish hosts this project with a legal responsibility for governance, employment and safeguarding. The day to day management of the project is overseen by the 'Steering Group', which is a constituted sub-committee of the PCC, with representation and accountability to our sister parishes within the Group. Mother Gemma supervises the day to day operations

Starting a major project like this in summer 2020 was far from ideal. However the team have spent time building relationships and have been really effective at making connections with a variety of people across the group. At Christmas the team identified over 40 households that were experiencing specific needs and were able to deliver appropriate hampers and Christmas gifts to these individuals and families. These gifts were funded by the generosity of both parishioners and other supporters from across the town. Very late in the day we received a grant from the Love Christmas campaign which enabled to reach out to other households both through local contacts and also through St Aidan's kitchen. Jess the families and children's worker also coordinated an on-line Christingle to a total of eight schools.

We remain committed to serving our parish in a variety of ways. Asylum Seekers have continued to be dispersed to Hartlepool and through the year we have done what we can to support these individuals both through simple acts of service and also supporting those who wish to explore the Christian faith. Like most things the Persian Bible Study stopped in March. But it restarted in the summer using zoom and has continued to meet regularly ever since. Weddings and Baptisms were reduced significantly in 2020 but the clergy carried out a considerable number of funerals including a number related to Covid. The great majority of funerals were held at the crematorium chapel with many restrictions in place. For some this magnified the pain of bereavement and loss significantly and looking forward this remains a significant area for ministry in the future. Where possible we have also continued to build links and minister to our schools.

Our parish and the group continue to be a place where there are many opportunities to learn about Christian Ministry. In September we welcomed Rachel and Seth Price into our community. Rachel is training for Church of England ministry at Cranmer Hall but completing approximately 50% of her training here in Hartlepool. She will be with us until summer 2022. In October we were also joined by Lizelke Klindt a 'ministerial experience volunteer' (MEV). Alongside this Rev Michelle Delves and Rev Clive Hall continue to train for ministry in the Church of England. During the lock down Michelle took the opportunity to work with the volunteers at the "Poolie time exchange" building a number of really good links with our community. In October Clive attended a candidates' panel and from the end of his training in May 2021 he will be able seek a stipendiary job as an ordained priest, in another parish.

In March as part of the lock down Burbank Community Church congregation was forced to shut. As it was based in a school it was not possible to reopen this congregation throughout the rest of the year. Towards the end of the year following a period of prayer I consulted with the Burbank Leadership Team and the then the Church Wardens. Early in January 2021 PCC took the difficult

decision not to reopen this congregation. We thank Clive and Angela Hall for the work they have done with the Burbank community Church over many years and supporting the remaining members of this congregation and the way in which they have encouraged them to integrate into the other services. Although that Sunday congregation has closed Clive remains the Community worker for the Burbank area and volunteer chaplain at Ward Jackson School. We do pray for a 'new thing' to emerge in 2021.

Finally I would like to thank Peter Anderson and Angela Craig our Church Wardens. Both have worked tirelessly in really trying circumstances this year. In particular I would like to thank Angela who has served 6 years as Church Warden and is now standing down. Thank you. In September Mother Gemma announced that she intends to move to Australia sometime in 2021. This does mean that as a parish and a group we will be moving into a time of significant transition in the coming year. As we move forward we do need to discern prayerfully where God is leading and how best to invest in the future. God is faithful, may he be glorified in our parish and our town.

In hope, grace and peace

*Norman*

### **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 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019 until the date this report was approved are:

*Priest in Charge:*      The Rev'd Norman Shave      Chairman

*Wardens:*                Mr Peter Anderson  
                                 Mrs Angela Craig

*Representatives on the Deanery Synod:*  
                                 Mr Andrew Rogers  
                                 Mrs Sylvia Shepherd

*Elected members:*

Mrs Maureen Anderson	Secretary
Mrs Ann Courtenay	Resigned
Mr David Craig	Treasurer
Mrs Azam Chaichi	
Mrs Diane Greenwood	
Mr David House	
Mrs Cheryl Mills	
Mrs Lynda Parvin	
Miss Mary Robinson	Resigned
Mrs Jacqui Rogers	
Mrs Mary Tones	

*Ex-officio members:*

Rev'd Michelle Delves

*Co-opted members:*

Mr Clive Hall

The full PCC met five times during the year with an average level of attendance of 64%. 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 97 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll, parish. Nine names were removed and two names added during the year.

*Ken Shepherd*

*Electoral Roll Officer*

### **FINANCE REPORT**

We thank God for his great generosity towards us in meeting our financial needs in 2020. The Church had an overall net surplus of £5,689 in 2020 (2019 - £4,760): however, this simple comparison does not bring out the huge challenges and changes that took place in both obvious and less obvious aspects of our church life and ministry, affecting the financial resources entrusted to us, and consequently the work we have been able to do as a Church. The Net surplus for the year represents £9,762 surplus on General Fund less £4,073 St Matthews Community Centre deficit which has been met from Community Centre Reserves.

In presenting the financial report on the Accounts for 2021 I would first like to record with gratitude the bequest of the late Margaret Lumley, who left in her will £35,563 for parish use without restriction. £23,000 of this bequest together with £12,000 in grants and previous years' gift day monies was applied in 2020 to the completion of the Accessibility works described in Revd Norman's Report. Of the £12,500 (or so) funds remaining from Margaret's bequest, £3,000 was used to offset the underlying deficit explained more fully below, and £9,500 has been carried forward to 2021 in the surplus on general fund, and is available to fund other developments. Margaret was a mainstay of this Church for the whole of her life and a supporter of wider Christian mission and ministry through her unfailingly generous commitment of time, gifts and giving: it is not just we who will miss her but the whole Christian Community, including the Society of St Francis, St Aidan's Church and the Mission to Seafarers among many others. In missing her, we also thank God for her life and witness, and the encouragement she gave to all whom she met.

Clearly the 2020 pandemic had a drastic effect on some aspects of our revenues. Community Centre income fell by 45% through lockdowns. Net fee income and Occasional Services offertory collapsed as weddings and baptisms were postponed into 2021 and the Burbank Community Church stopped meeting. Several of our regular members died and some have moved away, leading to some falls in regular giving. However, this reduction in income was offset by some generous "one-off" donations, a large element of which was specified as restricted funds to meet the costs of employment of our

staff - whom we did not “furlough” as they had much to do in new and different “Remote” ways to support the ministry team.

I would particularly like to thank those who continued to give in a planned and prayerful manner through Bank Standing orders and the Parish Giving scheme (PGS) and to those who were able to save up their weekly envelopes too. Without that bedrock of regular giving commitment and the uplifts many provided in response to difficult working conditions, we would have struggled financially: I encourage all who are not already members to consider joining the PGS – it can be done entirely confidentially and online!

In our expenditures, we met our agreed Parish share to the Diocese in full at £30,900 – about the only really predictable figure in all the circumstances of 2020! Some of our running costs such as heating lighting and general running costs were reduced because our buildings were closed and on standby for much of the year. Our stationery and print costs rose because of the enlarged weekly notices distribution and free circulation of Signpost.

Another big financial change during 2020 was the arrival of the Hartlepool Communities of Hope team, which Stranton Parish agreed to “Host” on behalf of the Group. Central church grant funding for the team via the Diocese of Durham and other income raised locally is “Ring fenced” as a restricted fund so has no direct impact on church finances, other than office rent paid to the St Matthew’s Community Centre. The grants received of £21,545 plus local income generated of £1,402 offset in full the costs of the team and their work.

To close my report - somewhat predictably, perhaps, but none the less whole heartedly - I would like to thank you for letting me join with you in all your generosity, and especially for the wise support and encouragement of Maureen Anderson as Assistant Treasurer, for the commitment and long service of Barbara Butcher as St Matthew’s Community Centre Treasurer, and to Ken Shepherd and the counting team for their unseen but vital support.

*David Craig*

*Hon Treasurer, May 2021*

## **BUILDING AND FABRIC OF THE CHURCH**

The socket wiring in the former vicar’s vestry has been replaced (as requested in the fixed electrical inspection) with a new ring main as part of the Accessibility works. The electrical supply to enable projector and screen operation has not yet been finalised and approved by the church authorities. This will enable the under carpet wiring finally to be removed.

The lightning protector, burglar alarm, boiler, emergency lighting and fire extinguishers and electrical appliances have all been tested and serviced.

No work has been carried this year on the organ or furthering its refurbishment. It is hoped to proceed with this once working conditions return to more normality.

The vicar’s vestry has been moved into what was the choir vestry. It needs painting and decorating.

The new accessible toilet is now in use.

A firm has been employed to examine the rooves and guttering of the church and a small amount of remedial work is required and particularly high gutter cleaning.

A logbook is kept, and all alterations and repairs to the church are entered in it.

An inspection of articles belonging to the church (terrier) was satisfactorily completed in March.

A review of Fire risk assessment and Health and Safety policy were made during the year and adopted by the PCC.

Our thanks go to the many volunteers who have faithfully assisted in all the areas mentioned above and looked after the Church during these difficult times, including those acting as Vergers for Weddings/Funerals, and others who carried on cleaning, tidying and gardening.

Thanks go also to our assistant wardens Rohan Wanduragala and David House.

A major effort has been in place to distribute (by email or physically) the weekly notices and monthly signpost to as many of the congregation as possible; in line with GDPR consent and we especially thank Ian Walker and David Craig who helped with this.

*Angela Craig, Peter Anderson*  
*Churchwardens*

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT**

The church wardens attended health and safety and fire risk assessment training days organised by Ecclesiastical Insurance.

The policies concern the safety of people not the buildings. The church will (as employer of the Community of Hope project staff) employ five or more staff and is legally required to have a formally adopted health and safety policy. This is in addition to the health and safety risk assessments and action plans which have been and continue to be carried out annually.

Health and safety audits have been carried out by both churchwardens in March 2020 and 2021.

The principal remaining issue is cables under carpets, which needs to be resolved as part of our review of Audio-visual equipment.

The carpet in church is wearing in high use areas and we are increasingly using tape to secure joins. The carpet needs to be replaced, hopefully in the next year after the audio-visual project is completed.

Lighting to the rear path to church needs to be improved as the brewery lighting has not been repaired and is reduced.

We would thank David Craig, Peter, Mike Weimer and Rohan for assisting in repairing the entrance path and the base of the door to the church.

The kitchen vinyl needs patching by the sink.

Following advice for emergency use, we have placed a key for the west door next to it in a new "break glass" box.

Due to the current circumstances, we have not yet managed to carry out fire and emergency response training with the sides-persons, vergers and various group leaders who all need to act as fire wardens along with the Churchwardens. We wish to carry out this "emergency response" training after the APCM or as soon as possible in accordance with the regulations.

*Angela Craig, Peter Anderson*  
*Church Wardens*

## **DEANERY SYNOD REPORT**

As you may imagine, the Deanery Synod has been affected by the Covid restrictions and only held one face to face meeting; this was on 10<sup>th</sup> March, before the first lockdown. The subsequent synod on 17<sup>th</sup> November was held using Zoom.

During the March meeting Rev Dr Alan Prince from Cuthbert House talked about developing Lay Ministry and introduced a new national process and asked the Deanery to pray for and support anyone who feels "called" from their local congregations. Many other events, including visits to the Cathedral and local pilgrimages were planned, of course, subsequently to no avail. However, it was agreed to distribute monies from the Alderman Hogg trust to each of our church schools, each school receiving £200.

In the November meeting, the Community of Hope initiative was discussed along with the proposal to utilise Saint Aidan's House.

A feature of the Synod meetings has been a "We tried this" agenda item. This offers each parish to share and reflect on the outcomes of local initiatives and activities.

Finance is always on Synod's mind; particularly during the last year with the introduction of the new guided pledge parish share offer and the reduction in income from the occasional offices. However, the mood of Synod always tries to remain optimistic remembering that our God is a good and generous God and we need to show patience in waiting on His timing.

*Andrew Rogers*

## **SAFEGUARDING - CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION**

This year has had its challenges regarding safeguarding in the church. As the majority of groups stopped meeting face to face, but have had some online presence. We continue to maintain good communication with Beth Miller (Diocesan safeguarding officer) whenever concerns arise.

Following safeguarding guidance from the diocese, Youth Fellowship began online in September. Meeting online has its own safeguarding risks, however an abundance of caution over online communication with young people (typically, via their parents) is mitigating for this as much as possible.

We continue to follow the Diocesan Safeguarding Policies, most recently updated in March 2021. The diocese also ask for the parish to complete a regular checklist to ensure we are meeting their expectations for good practice, this was last completed by the PCC in February 2021.

Fourteen people (both those working directly with children and young people, and those in positions of responsibility in the church) have completed the Diocesan safeguarding training this year – which is coordinated by Clive Hall.

There have been no major safeguarding incidents reported this year.

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

*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 and St Matthew's Hall. 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**

9:00	Holy Communion	A quiet said service using traditional liturgy
11:00	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 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sundays include communion 4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday, Lighthouse is a good service to try if you are new to church, it includes welcomes for families wanting baptism.

### **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**

What a strange year we have had since Spring 2020. We were pleased that online worship has taken place during the Lockdowns when we were unable to meet in church. We are very grateful to all who have streamed services including recorded or live worship, particularly to Andy and Lucy for all their recording of songs for others to use and to Angela and Clive for their live worship.

We are so pleased to be back in church to worship together but with all the restrictions it has been frustrating that the congregation have not been allowed to sing. Thank you to Angela and Seth who have helped to lead worship when we were only allowed one singer.

Hannah has now relocated to the south and we are very thankful for her uplifting clarinet playing over the last 6 years. It's been wonderful to welcome Jeni in her place with her beautiful harmonies. Gradually as restrictions lift group members are returning to swell the sound and we look forward to the time when we will all be able to lift our voices to God together

*Julie Shave*

## **BURBANK COMMUNITY CHURCH and YOUTH, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

### **Burbank Community Church**

The numbers of attendees at Burbank Church has been an ongoing concern for us for a while. We have been thinking for over 2 years if we should close or keep going. With the Covid lockdown we simply could not meet together in school. We were also warned that in school they had designated bubble areas which meant we would not be allowed back into School Hall even when school was open again. Taking all this into consideration we had discussion with Church members over Zoom. We had meeting as a Burbank Leadership Team with Norman present in the meeting. We had a 24 hour Prayer time to seek God guidance. We all felt that the time was right to close the Burbank Church. We had further discussion with Church Wardens and then with the PCC. It was agreed that Burbank Community Church would close. I and the church members were saddened that this had to happen, but also sensed God was guiding us into making this happen.

I have been a part of the clergy team that has been taking the On Line services on Sundays and midweek reflections and night Prayer. This has been quite a learning curve in the last year. Plus with lots of meetings on Zoom it had been a time of getting to grips with Technology.

I have enjoyed taking the Sunday services in Stranton and St Luke's Church recently. It is so good to have a live audience and a nodding head. I am particularly looking forward to being able to sing again in church.

### **Overseer for Youth, Children and Family work**

There has not been much opportunity to become a volunteer in church in the last year so not much to report here, but with the light at the end of the tunnel and a date of 21<sup>st</sup> June getting nearer. When we do start church and youth groups again there might be a need for volunteers. There is a volunteer recruitment process which I will guide volunteers through. Just let me know if you are interested in volunteering in church.

### **Bridge Builders**

This is normally held in Burbank Community Centre. When lock down started we stopped meeting. We are unsure about the future of this group because the Burbank Community Centre then became a kitchen that makes meals for people who are struggling and the centre is not open to the public yet.

### **Ward Jackson School**

Angela continues to work at Ward Jackson School she is a Thrive practitioner there.

I am now the Chaplain of the School; I meet with parents at the school gates and talk to people in the playground while they wait for children to come out of school. I used to have meals with the children but due to their strict rules on not mixing bubbles I have not restarted this.

This term will see me restarting Worships on line with them, and will continue to help support staff by going into classes and talking in their RE Lessons.

### **Personal News**

I was encouraged to attend the Candidates Panel. I did attend the panel on the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and I passed it. This means that when I finish my training has a priest towards the end of May

this Year. I would now be able to apply for a role of significant responsibility. (Run a church somewhere)

I will meet with Bishop Sarah on the 10<sup>th</sup> May to discuss if I have passed my final independent review and a discussion on what my future holds from the end of May. I will of course keep people informed out all these outcomes as they come up.

I would like to thank-you all for your support in the roles I have in the church and especially in my journey towards becoming a Priest. I really do appreciate your prayers and encouragements.

*Reverend Clive Hall*

## **STRANTON TODDLER GROUP**

Due to the Covid pandemic, Toddlers stopped meeting in mid-March last year. I decided to keep in touch with our families delivering a 15-minute song and story time on-line every Tuesday morning through to July. This was well received but numbers were very low by the end of term.

In January, Jess (Communities of Hope) started Tea and Hope on zoom for families with young children at home. She taught some Macaton signs, told a bible story and led a short craft session and I led a short singing time. It was lovely to reconnect with a few families from Toddlers and one or two others. She decided to stop the sessions at the end of the Spring term.

Although St Matthews Community centre has recently re-opened, we have decided not to resume sessions this term due to all the continuing restrictions of social distancing and wearing of masks, cleaning equipment and keeping everyone safe.

However, we have begun to meet up weekly in Ward Jackson Park for a walk, play and natter. It has been great to catch up with parents and childminders and to see the children enjoying playing together and benefiting from the fresh air.

We look forward to getting back to normal as soon as it is safe to do so.

*Julie Shave*

## **MESSY CHURCH**

Due to the Covid pandemic, Messy Church has not met since February 2020 and we have really missed our gatherings with the families who were part of Messy Church.

Through the summer term I delivered a Messy Church session live on Facebook every Sunday afternoon with a bible story, song, prayer and craft ideas. As there was reduced interest later in the term, I decided not resume the sessions in September. In December Norman and I did a Christingle session, delivering Christingle packs to families who requested them and Kate assisted in delivering packs to the Sunday Club families. This was very well received.

Kate began to film some brilliant online Sunday Club videos in January with a bible story and follow up crafts and activities and I have shared these to the Messy Church Facebook page for families to enjoy.

We very much look forward to meeting up as Messy Church as soon as it is safe to do so.

*Julie Shave*

## SUNDAY CLUB

Unfortunately, due to the covid-19 pandemic Sunday Club has not been able to operate in its usual manner. However, the church has worked hard to ensure that there were resources available for our young people.

In March 2020 when lockdown started and churches were closed, I created a virtual Sunday Club which involved emails being sent out which included a bible reading and some activities for children that could be completed independently, as well as an additional activity that needed adult support. The emails covered various themes including Creation, Jesus' Parables, Psalms as well as special calendar days such as Earth day and VE day. In total almost 60 emails were sent out to ten different families between March and July in the absence of Sunday Club. The emails seemed to be well received and some of the children even contributed to a Signpost article about which activities they had enjoyed completing during lockdown.

In September 2020 the Sunday Club team worked hard to reopen the Sunday Club on a biweekly basis but unfortunately due to a high increase in infection numbers it was decided that the Sunday Club could not reopen until the infection rates had decreased. This saw to the return of weekly emails being sent out to some of our families.

At Christmas the Sunday Club children received Christmas presents and Christingle Kits. The Christmas gifts included sweets, a bible colouring bookmark and a bible themed jotter pad. The children were very excited to receive their presents. In addition to this the Sunday Club also created small Christingle kits which included all the materials needed to create a Christingle at home with Julie kindly filming an online Christingle service for the children to participate in from home.

In January 2021 and with the return of another lockdown I decided to create weekly videos that could be posted on the church website and the Sunday Club Facebook page to provide a resource for our children and families to use. These videos include a bible story, short talk and some craft activities that the children can try at home. These videos have been well received and have included some fun activities including baking, decoding hieroglyphics, an animal quiz, painting, drawing and even making salt dough. These videos will continue on a weekly basis until August 2021. A huge thank you to David and Paul for creating and facilitating the uploading of the videos online.

During Easter 2021 the children received Easter gift bags which included an Easter egg, craft activity set, colouring pages and an Easter Nest Cake Kit. Ten families received these gift bags and 18 children received an Easter egg. Some of the children also contributed to a Signpost article about their Easter gift bags. They enjoyed taking part.

*Kate Lawson*  
*Sunday Club Leader*



YF is a space for fellowship, prayer, Bible study, fun, and silly games. Each term we have had a main theme or focus interspersed with other one-off themes. The group has changed with Covid 19 we have had to adapt to the situation and have done this by using zoom to run YF online.

Rachel has been a great addition to our team. We still play games and eat together and have a great bible thought. We have covered Easter, community, and separation which we used the woman at the well, Jonah and the people with leprosy and how we can relate due to Covid and how to meet

God in this. We have been blessed to be able to have the girls in Germany on zoom for our YF sessions. We also attended the Durham diocese youth event by zoom and some of our youth did videos about how they have felt during the pandemic. We are prayerfully looking forward and risk assessing for future possible meetings in person.

*YF Leadership Team*



2020 started well with science experiments and a first aid badge but then everything stopped. Some girls only managed a couple of meetings before our first lockdown and some have joined without ever meeting us, others are just waiting to start and many have moved on to Brownies without us saying goodbye.

Our lovely group has changed and we don't really know each other just now. So this and our very high numbers mean we have too many to be able to meet together safely but we are sending out activities to do at home.

After a successful appeal we have a new experienced and wonderful new leader ready to take up the challenge of Rainbows as soon as we are up and running again.

We look forward to a new beginning soon and have our programme all planned up to Christmas.

*Christine Robinson*  
*Rainbows Leader*



2020, what a strange year! Everything that can be said about it – has been said.

In January, we were offered the opportunity of a new Leader for Guides, wonderful news and the best news is Gill has stuck with us! She managed meeting in the hall until the 16<sup>th</sup> March, we had already decided we were not going to meet in the hall for a while, which maybe a year and half before we meet face to face outside. We were then offered a new Leader for Brownies, just 2 weeks before that last meeting, unfortunately she has struggled with the situation but we may see her again.

We decided to see if Zoom would work for Brownies and Guides, the first meeting being on the 27<sup>th</sup> April, a huge learning curve for the girls and Leaders. We had the 40mins system which made meetings very precarious as never sure whether we had enough planned, often cut off in the middle of things, no proper end to the meeting. We continued every week. The last meeting being on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August when we had a virtual meeting on the beach with games.

We returned on the 7<sup>th</sup> September, Girlguiding had provided licences for zoom, so meeting lengths were not a problem. Brownies was an hour from 6pm and Guides from 7.15pm, it was great to be able to have a proper end to the meeting but we have learnt singing has many, many problems.

We were offered the opportunity of another Leader, a brave person joining on Zoom. Sarah-Jane has been a great asset to Brownies and as a result her daughter has joined the pack.

We have had several Brownies join during the year, most have continued, a few have stated they will continue once we are back face to face.

If we look at what has happened during the year, there have been many ups and down, positives and negatives. Hopefully, we are all stronger, we have missed the interaction with the girls; there was definitely a huge difference between the meetings on the first lockdown to the second, when the girls were on zoom for school, we had more drop out till we meet again face to face.

We are hoping, depending on the data etc, to meet outside from mid-June 2021.

We are hoping we have supported individual girls during this last year as a Brownie and a Guide lost a father due to Cancer and we have had a Guide's father die suddenly this year. It has been hard (as we all know) to help provide support for these girls but we are always there for them.

Looking forward, we are hoping to start meeting with the Brownies and Guides, outside from the 21<sup>st</sup> June but will depend on what is happening in the roadmap we are following out of lockdown

*Cheryl Mills*

*(Leader with Brownies & Guides)*



**4<sup>th</sup> Hartlepool Boys Brigade**  
**Founded 1930**

Boys Brigade, like all groups has been hit by the pandemic and during non-meeting times we kept in contact with members via Easter Egg drop offs, Christmas treats, booklet challenges and drawings

We have lost two camps and had to re-jig our programmes

The positives are, we now have a selection of challenges and games to play in each section which we would not have thought about in normal times. 2metre rules helps our juniors judge distances better when marching.

The Company section and Junior boys have returned to the meetings and we have a high number of very regular attendees

We need to recruit anchor boys, member numbers are down - it takes a while for boys and families to get the habit of regular attendance.

Staff - we have kept all our leaders and hope to train our NCO's up so they are ready to keep the Company running in the years to follow.

Financially - we have received donations and grants so we have managed to improve and restock our equipment during the pandemic

Finally we would like to thank Carol Laud for all her support during the pandemic

*George Bainbridge*

*Leader in Charge, 4<sup>th</sup> Hartlepool Boys Brigade*

## **PASTORAL GROUP**

On the pastoral front, as with everything else, this year has been a year like no other. Unable to make our usual visits, the pastoral team have moved to telephone contact, making sure that everyone has everything they need and providing emotional support and, where needed, practical help such as shopping. We have widened our net to include those who would normally be able to get to church, but have been prevented from doing so, whether by lockdown or because they have been shielding. Our aim has been not only to provide support, but to maintain our links with those who, in many cases housebound, are particularly vulnerable to isolation, and to help them to continue to feel included in our church family. Some of them have taken advantage of the streamed services, which has been a bonus for both those who would normally attend church and those who have not been able to attend services for some time. We have all admired their stoicism and courage through the vicissitudes of the last year and, as always, have much to learn from them.

As part of our support strategy, we delivered Christmas cards and a small gift, followed by Easter cards and Easter eggs. This also gave us the opportunity to knock on doors and see people in person. We are now looking forward to being able to re-start our visits and provide home communion to those who want it.

There have been some changes to our team, which now consists of Steph Boyd (who completed her Pastoral Care course), Ian Walker, Rohan Wanduragala, Diana Wanduragala (associate member), myself and Mary Tones, who is a welcome new addition. We also acquired a new leader at the start of the pandemic when Norman delegated to Michelle the job of overseeing the pastoral work of the church. We have continued to have regular meetings, on Zoom, and have kept in contact by telephone.

As we move on, we are looking to expand into bereavement support and would welcome new members to our team to continue our important and very rewarding work.

*Pam Stockton*

## **MOTHERS` UNION REPORT**

Due to Covid we have been unable to meet together for over a year now. I've managed to distribute M.U. news and other paper work etc to Stranton members and tried to keep them up to date when I hear from M.U. Durham lead.

When we get the all clear from M.U. Durham it's also clear to return to St Mathew's Community Centre we can get back together again

We are now 15 members after the sad death of Hilary Harkness last September. Hilary was a lovely lady and is sadly missed. She enjoyed being with us and was a wonderful example to us all - and she made us laugh.

One of our members was blue-lighted with Covid to North Tees Hospital and was quite ill. She is much better now and is being careful where she goes shopping and keeps social distancing.

2021 has been a waiting year, waiting for news about when we could be vaccinated, waiting for when we could meet up with other families, waiting to come out of lockdown, being told how to go shopping safely and so on.

We are looking forward to meeting together again, to catch up with each other's news and to worship and pray for the work of Mothers' Union throughout the world.

*God Bless*

*Ann Courtenay*

*Branch Leader*

## **BELLRINGING REPORT**

With the pandemic outbreak of the Covid 19 virus, government restrictions on group meetings, the continuance and the subsequent waves of the virus, in the last year has resulted in very little tower bell ringing activity. Because the Hartlepool ringers have strong bonds and friendship, they have regularly shared discussions, jokes and Radio 4's "Bells on Sunday" on line, mainly via the medium of WhatsApp. Some ringers have taken advantage of a newly developed ringing computer application, "Ringing Room" which allows ringers to meet others virtually and practice ringing with them from the comfort of their own homes.

In October, 2020, the PCC commissioned two firms of bellhangers, Taylors of Loughborough and Whites of Appleton, to carry out surveys of the bells, their fittings and supporting structures. The companies were asked to report on conditions and to make recommendations for work as well as to provide quotations for the recommended works. The bells have become a little challenging to ring and with the passage of time, parts have become worn. Environmental conditions have affected both the tone and tuning of the bells.

Both companies were able to identify a number of changes that could be made to the bells to improve their ringability and to make them more tuneful. Some of the items of improvement were identified as being required immediately, whereas, others were identified to be beneficial to prevent works in the future. The PCC studied the reports, and, after further enquiries, were able to select one of the companies to carry out works as soon as possible. A Faculty application is being prepared and there has been great progress to raise the necessary funds from donations and grants.

It is expected that if Covid restrictions become relaxed sufficiently in the near future, Sunday service ringing will be able to return, prior to the commencement of works.

*Andrew Kaye*

*Tower Captain*

## **ST MATTHEW'S COMMUNITY CENTRE ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT**

As with everywhere and everyone else 2020 has been a strange year at St Matthew's. The centre closed at the end of March 2020, along with almost everything else in the country due to the government restrictions imposed because of the covid-19 pandemic. When these restrictions were eased we opened again to small groups for a short spell in June before another closure, and then again in September before closing in November until the end of 2020. The building has just recently reopened to restricted groups as part of step 2 of the government's road map to recovery.

However, during the summer last year we were successful in negotiating 2 new long term contracts for St Matthew's. One with the Probation Service and the other with the Communities of Hope team. As both of these contracts are work related they were allowed to use the building under the guidelines issued by Public Health England. Both contracts started in September 2020.



In December 2020 we said a reluctant farewell to our long standing Treasurer Barbara Butcher. Barbara's vision and hard work and prolific fundraising have been an inspiration to many of us at St Matthew's and we will miss her very much. So thank you Barbara.

We don't know what 2021 may bring but we are cautiously optimistic and we will be ready to run when the traps open.

*Carol Laud*

*St Matthew's Community Centre Management*