

Stranton and Burbank Community Church

SIGNPOST



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

March 2021

Dear Friends,

As lockdown continues many of us are finding it pretty difficult. It's great that the numbers of Covid cases are dropping and the vaccine programme continues apace, but it's now a year since the pandemic began to bite. This winter has been tough for all sorts of reasons. Health and wellbeing in this time are a real challenge.

As Christians one thing that can encourage us are verses from the Bible. This morning one of the set readings was from 2 Corinthians. The more I thought about it the more I realised Paul in the letter seeks to encourage the Church in difficult times. I hope and pray one of these verses is an encouragement to you.

In Chapter 12 verse 9 God says to Paul in his struggles, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' We are all aware of weaknesses and failing at the moment. I give thanks for God's grace at work in our lives. Through Jesus we can continue to know God's love at work in our lives. He also is present with us by the Holy Spirit strengthening and equipping us. Thank you Lord for your grace.

Earlier in Chapter 4 we read, 'Therefore since we have this ministry through God's mercy we do not lose heart.' Life is tough for many people and ministry is tough. But God's life-giving mercy is bigger than our present troubles. It is in Christ that we have the hope of new life, resurrection life, 'so we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal' (verse 18). In our present circumstances may we remember the hope, love, grace and mercy God gives us in Jesus.

Every blessing

Norman

Mothers Union

After a long and very cold winter, spring is on the way. I planted lots of different bulbs in late autumn and have been watching for signs of growth. Shoots are now appearing and snowdrops showing their dainty petals in sheltered corners of the three small gardens that belong to my home. I had a new fence erected in a corner of the front garden and I am delighted to see lots of daffodils pushing through the soil there. In the side garden (the dog's garden!), in lots of the planted tubs and beds these too are sending up shoots and signs of growth – one new winter flowering buddleia is actually in flower and quite fragrant too! In the courtyard at the back are more pots and also raised beds – the first snowdrops have appeared here.

We can get weighed down by the lockdowns we are going through, but if we remember that our plants need a time “underground” before they push through to daylight and flowering, we can also blossom again when we return to “normality”.

As we are now in the season of Lent do use your MU Prayer Diary and remember our members here in the United Kingdom and around the World. This diary is prepared quite a while in advance yet it's often quite amazingly up to date with the prayer topics.

Please pray for each other. Pray for peace over health issues within our group. Give thanks for the improved health of others. Pray for the many in our church taking time to check up on those who are more vulnerable to the virus. Pray for our Worldwide president Sheran as she leads us in these changing times. Pray for our clergy and our Church Wardens here with our PCC during these different times.

May we blossom together in our corner of God's garden.

God Bless.

Love

Ann Courtenay



From the Home Front

This third lockdown has proved to be so much harder for so many people. Anxiety and stress levels have risen, low mood and depression have become commonplace. I know because I have found myself feeling really down.

Everyday tasks became a real chore. My sleep was more broken and I woke earlier, unable to get back to sleep. When the Covid death toll reached 100,000 it profoundly affected me, I cried at even the thought of anything sad. Thinking of neighbours, friends, family worries and hearing of people dying or affected by illness made tears flow. I became anxious about going shopping, being unable to help my children more and them traveling to work in the freezing weather and snowy conditions. I so miss physical contact and meeting with people in the flesh! It was hard to pray and I felt that although God was there, He was not communicating. I felt frustrated and despondent at times. I made myself go for walks, even after the loss of our little dog Dougal, but I gained little pleasure from them. But keeping a routine felt important, so I continued listening to Lectio 365 and some days the content did impact on my mood. Texts and messages from friends and family did make me feel valued and raise smiles at silly jokes.

Gradually I have felt God forcing me to look outwards, and although at times I have struggled, I have found that sending messages, dropping off cards and small gifts to cheer neighbours, friends, colleagues and family gave me a reason to go out, pleasure in the giving, plus positive reactions from the recipients also lifted my spirits. Gradually I have become increasingly aware of these 'God prompts' to act. I have felt able to go and speak these prompts to the folk concerned, put actions into very specific deeds and to motivate myself to join in the Prayer Course (better late than never!), to feed the birds first thing each day and to restart my Tai Chi exercises.

The snow has gone and signs of spring are emerging in the garden. Slowly, but with some setbacks, I feel my mood lifting. Norman's sermon on 14th February spoke to me – he talked of God being with us in the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23), and reinforced that, 'nothing can separate us from the love of God' (Romans 8), because God loves us, knows us and is with us. God says "I am with you" – He helps us to walk in hope and light.

So each day I am trying hard to focus on the positives and to give praise, but also to talk to friends and family about feelings and emotions. We are all in this together and the awareness of Covid's impact on our mental wellbeing is now openly acknowledged. So don't feel shamed or guilty about your feelings – talk to others, talk to God, cry and shout if you need to, don't try to 'be strong' or deny your feelings, seek help and look for the chinks of brightness in each day. Be kind to yourself, you don't need to get through this on your own.....

J.A.R.



'I waited patiently for the Lord;

He turned to me and heard my cry.

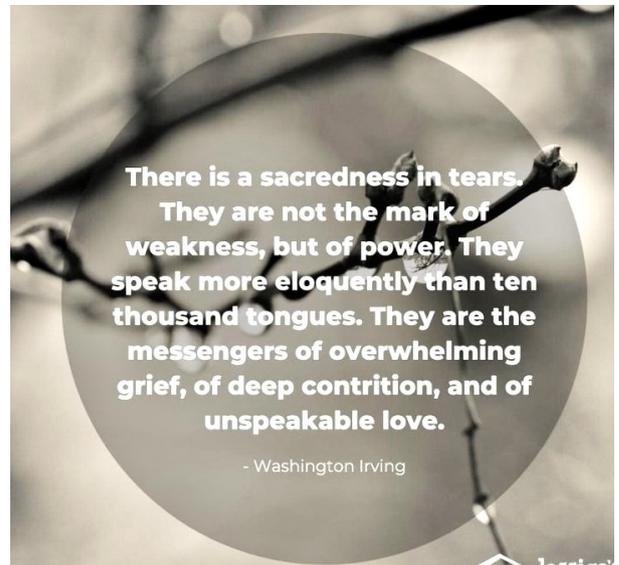
He lifted me out of the slimy pit,

out of the mud and mire;

He set my feet on a rock

and gave me a firm place to stand.'

Psalm 40:1-2



O Lord my God, do not be far from me.

My God, have regard to help me.

*I have many thoughts and great fears
afflicting my soul. How will I pass through
unhurt?*

How will I break them to pieces?

This is my hope, my one only consolation,

*to flee to You in every tribulation, to trust in
You,*

to call on You from my inmost heart,

*and to wait patiently for your consolation. ****

these mountains
that you are
carrying, you were
only supposed to
climb.

Najwa Zebian



Hartlepool Foodbank

Hartlepool Foodbank's Annual General Meeting will be held via Zoom on 1st March at 7:00pm. The Foodbank is a registered charity whose members are Hartlepool's Churches, so representatives of all churches are encouraged to attend. There has never yet been a vote at an AGM, but there could always be a first time. The AGM is also an open meeting, so anybody else who is interested is welcome to attend and ask questions (but not vote). If you wish to join in contact Andrew Craig for the Zoom code, ID and passcode to attend the meeting:

Paper copies of the Annual Report will be made available in the churches, when I can arrange for them to be deposited. There is an electronic copy and anybody who would like me to send them a copy of the report should contact me by e-mail (revdrandrewcraig@gmail.com).

We are recruiting a part-time (job share) Deputy Coordinator and warehouse manager, to start as early as possible after the end of March. It is 22 hours a week, which are flexible hours. If anyone would like more details or to have an informal chat about this, then they should contact me.

Foodbank news: January was a very busy month, during which our delivery service was stretched at times! God has blessed us during the time of restrictions due to the Coronavirus, but we understand this blessing is for people and families of the town who have been made vulnerable by loss of livelihoods and poor mental health.

With kind regards,
Andrew Craig



Chairman's Letter 2020

It's been an extraordinary year for Hartlepool's foodbank.

In January we were about to launch *Hands up for Hartlepool*, giving us a shop front in Middleton Grange Shopping Centre so that we and our partner organizations could have longer, informal meetings with clients, building on work we are able to do during lunchtime sessions on Tuesdays and Fridays. As well as giving out food to individuals and families in crisis, we spent time listening, signposting and occasionally helping them in other ways. Abi Knowles was our coordinator and Rev'd Clive Hall was chair of trustees.

All that changed during the year. Abi left in February to have a baby. Lisa Lavender took over as coordinator; Clive resigned as chair to give more time for his other responsibilities. The pandemic took hold, forcing us to suspend *Hands up for Hartlepool* and change the way we operate.

I would like to offer sincere thanks to Clive who led the trustees from Foodbank's inception at the end of 2012; congratulations to Abi on the birth of a baby son (we look forward to having her back in a part time role in 2021); and huge thanks to Lisa for taking over as coordinator and to Teagan Burns who came in to manage the warehouse.

For most of 2020 our operation has changed to comply with the restrictions needed to reduce the risk of infection by Covid 19. Although we have continued to serve a few clients at the door of our HQ, 28 Church Street, in May we instituted home deliveries to vulnerable individuals and families. Initially we used drivers and vans provided by *British Gas*, but then we continued making deliveries using our own van and teams of volunteers. We also provided food directly through our main referral agencies, particularly the Council's Hub. As the Council also asked us to provide food boxes for its wider programme of food relief during the first lock-down, our warehouse operation was exceptionally busy during this period.

The pandemic brought about a greater public awareness of the problem of food poverty. Many people have responded hugely generously to the challenge with substantial donations of both money and food so that warehouse stocks have remained solid and we are able to plan to replace our ageing van next year. We have received terrific support from businesses, including some retailers, for example: Tesco, giving financial support as the national partner to Trussell Trust as well as food collections; The ASDA Foundation; Embleton Dairies, providing fresh milk, yoghurt and butter for clients during the lockdown; Mecca Bingo, providing hampers for families at Christmas; and Hart Biologicals, committing financial support over 7 years. Churches and individuals have contributed liberally, with some extremely generous single donations and a number of people adding themselves to the list of regular donors – this is especially welcome as we seek to make the foodbank, including our employees, more financially secure.

The Council has maintained its support, a partnership which we greatly value. More information about this public and private generosity towards the most vulnerable of our town is given later in this Annual Report in the coordinator's report and the financial reports and appendices. I pay tribute to our vice chair, Mrs Susan Atkinson, for continuing to give generously of her time, applying to the charities and trusts that continue to provide core and development funding and to Mrs Angela Carrick our treasurer who gives this service without payment alongside a full time job. I thank God for it all.

In recent years, a number of other organizations and individuals have joined in providing food relief in Hartlepool. The Trussell Trust model is based on emergency relief, but other initiatives have, over time, provided food kitchens and informal foodbanks that help sustain more people, for example St Aidan's Kitchen and Poolie Time Exchange. The *Food Network* is a small number of individuals who have developed pathways to direct surplus food from supermarkets (including Morrison's) and wholesalers to families that need it. The Council recently led a contract to deliver subsidised food to families living near the margins ("*The Bread and Butter Thing*"). Together with these organizations, we have helped found an umbrella organization, *Hartlepool Food Council*, facilitated by Hartleypower, to deliver a more coordinated approach to food relief in our town. Developing our own 5 year strategy, we look forward to abolishing unavoidable food poverty, identifying real need and reducing dependency whilst channelling the town's generosity to those who are hungry.

As well as our employees, I would like to thank Mrs Josie Watson who continues to let us use 28 Church Street rent free, the owners of Middleton Grange for providing premises free of charge, Clive Rathbone our *pro bono* auditor, and our corps of volunteers - both those who have taken on new challenges and worked hard in the warehouse and hub and also those who, by virtue of age or vulnerability, have been unable to do as much as they wanted to. To all our supporters, employees, funders and volunteers, thank you very much for your generosity, your commitment and your love of those we serve. We are in good shape for the challenges of 2021.
Yours sincerely, **Andrew Craig**

Quarantine Quiz

- Q** Which Q was the Roman governor at the time of the first Christmas?
- U** Which U was married to Bathsheba
- A** Which A is the last word in the Bible?
- R** Which R birds fed Elijah?
- A** Which A was Moses brother?
- N** Which N was a prophet to King David?
- T** Which T has two books in the Bible?
- I** Complete the hymn title? I _____ I _____ God only wise
- N** Which N was a Commander and a leper?
- E** Which E was a village near to when Cleopas met a stranger?

For your growth in the Christian Faith

Racial Justice Lent Course

Due to unforeseen circumstances this course, led by Michelle Delves, will, for pastoral reasons, be delayed until after Easter.

The Prayer Course continues on Wednesday evenings at 7.30pm with Norman, Clive and Angela facilitating the sessions. It's a great opportunity to connect with each other. Each week is a different theme. Why not come and try a session – zoom links available from Norman and Clive. It is a course where every week stands alone so you are able to join in whenever you feel able.

On Wednesday afternoons in Lent, at 3pm (via Zoom), Starting 17th February, Mother Gemma will be leading a lent course entitled Women in the Shadows. Created by the Clewer Initiative (the Archbishop's Team for tackling Modern Slavery), this course uses short film clips, bible study, prayer, practical application, and discussion to explore the issues of Modern Slavery and particularly how women might be affected in our own communities.

#Live Lent is also available from the Church of England as an App for your phone or check out the Church of England Website. This includes reflections from the Archbishops

Tea and Hope: Tuesday mornings at 10am - Reaching out to families with young children, Bible story, craft and songs and time to chat together afterwards. On Zoom with Jess and Julie. For more information contact Jess jess@hartlepoolcoh.co.uk or on 07597 308751 or Julie 07763 490278

Online Sunday Club!

Thank you to everyone who has joined us for our fun online Sunday Club sessions so far. Recently we looked at the story of a Tall Tower that was called The Tower of Babel. Our activities included building our own towers and learning how to say hello in some different languages. Please join us on Sunday at 2pm on either our Sunday Club Facebook page or on the website. As an added bonus for Valentine's Day there was some fun Valentine's Day themed activity ideas. There was also a pancake recipe available for Shrove Tuesday/Pancake Day!

Kate Lawson

Sunday Club News

Our weekly online Sunday Club videos have been going on the Sunday Club Facebook page and church website, each Sunday at 2pm. So far the videos have looked at a variety of bible stories from the Old Testament including Noah's Ark, the Tall Tower of Babel and the story of Abraham and Sarah looking for a new home. Each session includes a bible story, short talk and a couple of activity ideas to try at home. Our fun activities have included taking part in a guess the animal quiz, building a tall tower and making salt dough to build a house.

Here is what's coming up:

28th February - Joseph's Colourful Robe

8th March - Pharaoh's Dreams

14th March - A Baby in a Basket (Mother's Day)

21st March - Ten Plagues

During Easter we will have some bonus online videos looking at the Easter story. Don't miss out...

28th March - The True King (Palm Sunday)

30th March - Washing the Disciples' Feet

31st March - The Last Supper

2nd April - Jesus Arrested and Crucified

4th April - Jesus is Risen (Easter Sunday)

EXCITING NEWS!

We have decided to continue these online Sunday Club videos until the end of August 2021.

Kate J

Answers Quarantine Quiz

- Q Which Q was the Roman governor at the time of the first Christmas? **Quirinus**
U Which U was married to **Bathsheba**
A Which A is the last word in the Bible? **Amen**
R Which R birds fed Elijah? **Ravens**
A Which A was Moses brother? **Aaron**
N Which N was a prophet to King David? **Nathan**
T has two books in the Bible? **Timothy**
I Complete the hymn title? **Immortal Invisible** God only wise
N Which N was a Commander and a leper? **Naaman**
E Which E was a village near to when Cleopas met a stranger? **Emmaus**

'What does Peace look like?

'Peace be still' Mark 4:39

I asked myself this question today

'If peace was a picture what would it look like?'

The first image that came to me was a fresh blanket of brilliant white snow, untouched. A field of freshly fallen snow is beautiful and calming as is walking beside a lake that is so still.

The next image that came to me was a small flower in a cracked pavement in an abandoned village that had been bombed. The flower was bright and steady in the midst of the rubble.

Peace is not always a state of calm when things are going right. Peace is deep inside us when the world is spinning too fast and there is so much sadness and heartache.

God is my peace, my centre in the midst of this crazy time. Let Him be your peace.

Let Him be your centre, your place of inner rest. Your shelter, your refuge. He longs for you to turn to him and he is waiting to give you His gift of peace.

Ang Hall



Update on Central Hartlepool Group Ministry

Dear Friends,

You may remember at the end of 2018 when the PCC formally agreed to become part of the Central Hartlepool Group Ministry that this was initially for a three-year period, with interim Priest-in-Charge appointments made to Revd Norman and Revd Gemma at St Luke's and St Aidan's respectively. In that agreement a review was to take place at the end of 2020 to discern a more permanent way forward.

Over the past few months, the Group Council and three PCC's have been having such discussions and all three PCC's have voted in favour of us continuing as a Group Ministry and asking the Bishop for permission to advertise for two permanent posts of incumbent status. A letter is being written to the Bishop and will be signed by the Churchwardens of all three churches with this request. In the short term, not a lot will change, but when Revd Gemma moves to Australia there will be more discussion around advertising and appointing the two permanent posts.

Please continue to pray for all three parishes, our clergy and each other as we continue to seek unity in diversity and to continue to grow God's Kingdom here in Hartlepool.

Andrew M

Alphabet of Gardening tips

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

D

Don't cut the foliage off daffodils. At most bend foliage over once and slip over an elastic band. Foliage may be cut 8 weeks after flowering has finished.

Cut daffodils above the white stem base, place in very cold water and leave in a cool place overnight.

Dogs won't cock their legs against pots which contain marigolds!

Dandelions may be controlled with salt.

Delphiniums will spike better with a dressing of lime.

Cut delphiniums – place in boiling water for a minute, then into cold water. Turn stem upside down, fill hollow stalk with water and plug the end with cotton wool

Daphne bushes – if yellowing a handful of Epsom salts in a bucket of water may help. Tea leaves are good for Daphne.

Dhalias are gross feeders – about 2 weeks before planting, manure the ground well.

Cut dhalias – place in 2-3 inches of boiling water for one minute then immediately into cold water.

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Update from Communities of Hope

Hello everyone, as I write my update to you, the day looks cold and beautiful and I find myself in an 'enduring' frame of mind. The work and Gospel ministry of our Communities of Hope carries on, as we continue to step out in faith, inspired by the words of the prophet Isaiah:

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:

to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,

to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

⁸ Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

⁹ Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I." *Isaiah 58*

Somehow his words feel particularly relevant as we approach Lent.

So, what have we been up to since Christmas? The ministry of the team proceeds well and steadily, and God is making his presence felt.

Jess has started a new on-line group centred on tea, toddlers and prayer, called 'Tea and Hope'. Eight families are engaging regularly and good relationships are forming, as the mums support and encourage one another around art and craft sessions, relaxed prayer and a cup of tea. We are hoping that this group will start meeting in person once Covid restrictions are sufficiently lifted.

Jess and I are also running an on-line Alpha group, with 9 people exploring faith and two volunteers supporting us; we all share the same snack, which Jess circulates beforehand, and talk about God and Jesus over crisps and chocolate. Jess will be running an online pancake-making session from St Aidan's Kitchen on Shrove Tuesday, helping us reconnect with some of the families we supported over Christmas; so far, 13 families have signed up, as well as several individuals from our congregations. Thank you for your continued support.

Jo has continued to establish herself at the Kitchen, along 'the ladder streets' * and amongst the homeless; this has enabled her to continue to build relationships with those most marginalised in our town. Relationships have been furthered by her being able to provide some elements of practical

support, such as assistance with obtaining white goods, help with benefits and housing, and signposting to other services. Prayer walking, door-step visits, one to one walks, prayer and even a one to one Bible study group are all contributing to the development of the spiritual lives of the people with whom she is engaging.

Jo seems really excited by her ministry to ‘the ladder streets’, as she anticipates it being a very community-led and inspired part of the project. Her hope is that the community will take shape and play an integral role in the activities and events we will hold in the area; this should, in time, develop to form a very local expression of church. Jo’s relationships with the homeless community have also received a further boost by her attending the Soup Run on a Wednesday night, as well as the recruitment of four volunteers (in pairs), to support her with her ministry. We have identified some good opportunities to develop this ministry indoors, once Covid allows it; please continue to pray for us, that this ministry may bear good fruit.

Emma & The Team

*(*Editor – ‘the ladder streets’ are the streets off Elwick Road between York Road and Bangor Street)*

Some Photos

The aftermath of Tea and Hope in Jess’s sitting room



Sensory bottle and ‘Teddy Express’ Car made at Tea and Hope last week and this week



‘Flippin Covid’ advert – our online pancake making session, reconnecting with 13 of the families we supported over Christmas.

What do your bookshelves say about you?

How do you arrange the books on your bookshelves, and, more to the point, what books do you have there?

There are many views about this topic, none of which is entirely conclusive. Here is just a taste from Matt Blake of Penguin Random House. There will be many other combinations and choices, but here is what Matt had to say in an article published in January 2020.

He identified six Tribes to which book lovers might belong.

Alphabetical You care deeply about books and want or need to know exactly where to find what you want when you want it. It has its drawbacks in that when you buy a new one you may find that fitting it in to the exact spot where it should go, its correct alphabetical sequence, causes more bother than it is worth. You may just have reached the stage where you need another shelf!

By Genre But how? Do you let each topic “bleed seamlessly” into the next, for example - History to Historic Fiction, Crime Fiction to Real Crime or do you set them up subject by subject, alphabetically? But then what if you have a choice as to where it fits best - Biography, Travel or whatever else may be appropriate?

By Colour Coding Organised like colours of the rainbow by the colours of their jackets? Or do you keep all the blues and blacks together in sombre array. Takes a while to find what you are looking for, particularly if you are colour blind.

Chronological No, not by organising your books by publication date, but to arrange them in a literary time line based on the period in which they are set, decade by decade, era by era.

By Value not by how much they cost but what value they are to you.

Stack 'n Pack laying books on their side on the shelves in no particular order or creating mini towers on the floor. You can certainly fit a lot more books into the available spaces around the house, but what happens when you desperately want one from the bottom of the pile in the far corner of the room?

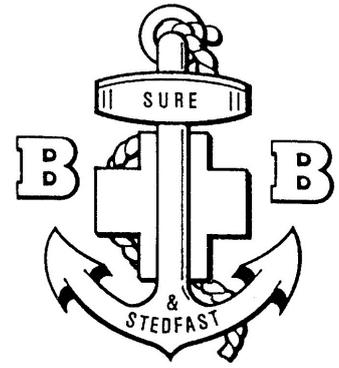
I will leave you to decide which category you fit into and what your books may be saying about you. Here is the link. Happy hunting.

<https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2020/jan/how-to-rearrange-your-bookshelf.html>

J Cornelius Starbuck (aka Jeff)



Boys Brigade News



Although we have not been meeting lately - we have been adding to our repertoire of games equipment by purchasing a new pool table which is on castors, therefore saving many a bad back!!!

We hope that we might re-start after the Easter Holidays (over to you Boris) and we have to accept that we will have limited numbers until at least September.

The Anchor Boys and Juniors will gain their awards via our Lockdown Booklet which we sent out at the end of January.

We have also swept the leaves and litter up at St Matthew's CC and intend to repeat this process in February.

If you would like to see various photographs and videos of our Boys in action why not visit our Facebook page?

Take care and keep safe

George Bainbridge

The New Norm



I'm logging to a Facebook service
A regular habit every Sunday morn
It's now become the new norm.
Information is given by email or notices
Giving all with a choice of time,
My favourite a quarter past nine.
A sweet cup of coffee in hand
As the service begins to go live
You hope the sermon is short
With ideas and words that are taut,
Accompanied by hymns or songs you know
Then everything will just flow
Ensuring for the rest of the week
We will feel that spiritual glow.



Prayer for UN Conference of the Parties, Glasgow, November 2021

Sustaining God
as in November, at great cost and with great urgency
the leaders of our species
and those with concern for their common home
will gather in Glasgow,
we ask for your welcoming, affirming presence
in the many layers of gathering
which are part of that event.

Give to those who make decisions
a freedom from the burdens of a past
which have pushed us to this cliff-edge.

Give a dawning vision of your offer of healing
greater than the blocked horizon of what it might cost

Argue and wrestle with the powers and principalities
of expediency and despair

Open every human ear to the voices of the Earth, and of sisters, brothers, siblings
who already suffer sharply

Save us from the despair of complacency
and the toxic temptation
when the visitors have departed
to embrace 'business as usual'
for that 'normal' has gone

And our only future
will be in wakefulness
trust,
hope,
yes, joy
as we live out your love for the Earth we are part of
through your Word made Flesh
Jesus, our Friend.

Hallelujah Anyway!
AMEN

The Humble Hymn Book

I am the Humble Hymn Book- you may have heard of me
You'd see me on the seat in front, or maybe on the floor
But now I'm mostly not in church, no more beneath your feet
Because you see the times have changed and now I'm obsolete.

I can't seem to project myself in colours on the wall,
That clash with background graphics and words that are too small.

I don't know how to show a verse, out of order or upside down,
Or jump between the choruses, like some demented clown.

Perhaps that's what they want these days, and clearly I'm not "with it"
But it isn't what they used to call "the moving of the spirit."

I have no bulb or fuse to blow, just at the worship height,
I'm not troubled by a power cut, except perhaps at night!

I wish I had some software, to confuse a hapless aide,
Or cables draped across the floor, to trip up some old maid.

One time any humble soul, could give out a book like me,
But now it needs a graduate to handle the technology.

My contents are an open book a constant flowing stream,
Not limited by the dictates of a programmed worship team.

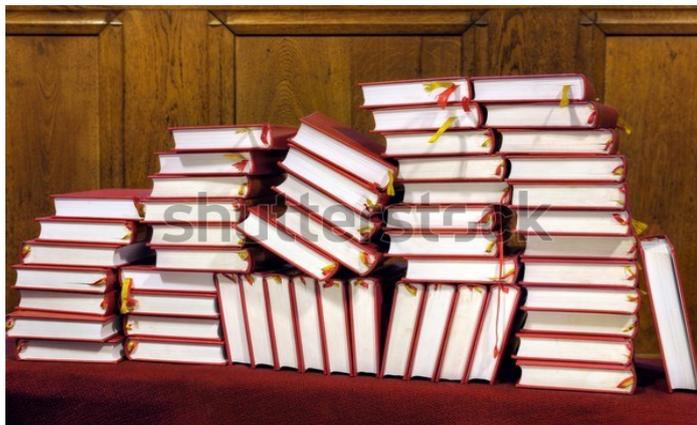
When thieves break into the church you know - no value they see in me,
As well as the collection - they take the laptop and PC!

Do I have a future then-my prospects do look hopeless,

Who cares this low tech book contains a treasure trove of witness.

I'll sit here in this cupboard dark, with the years of gathering dust,
But I'll be ready at your call, when your novelties are bust...

John Caldwell



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**You may think that you are completely insignificant in this world.
But someone drinks coffee from the favorite cup that you gave them.
Someone heard a song on the radio that reminded them of you.
Someone read the book that you recommended, and plunged headfirst into it.
Someone smiled after a hard day of work, because they remembered the joke that you told them today.
Someone loves themselves little bit more, because you gave them a compliment.
Never think that you have no influence whatsoever.
Your touch, word and good deed which you leave behind cannot be erased.**

Poem on wall at Romsey

Learn To make the most of life,
Lose no happy day,
Time will ne'er return again,
Sweet dances thrown away.
Leave no tender word unsaid
But love shall last.
The mill will never grind
With water that has past.

DO YOU WANT TO FAST THIS LENT?
In the words of Pope Francis

- Fast from hurting words and say kind words.
- Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
- Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
- Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.
- Fast from worries and have trust in God.
- Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.
- Fast from pressures and be prayerful.
- Fast from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy.
- Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.
- Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
- Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.

pietrafitness.com 

Via Rev Roz Holy Trinity West View

Andy Roberts MBE



We send our heartfelt congratulations to Andy Roberts (our CMS link missionary in Olinda, NE Brazil), who was awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List for his work with vulnerable children in Brazil.

Andy and his wife Rose run ReVive which works with children and teenagers in the North East of Brazil who are suffering from abuse, trafficking or exploitation. They aim to free them from their situation; restoring their lives and renewing their hope for a better future. ReVivie is now focussing on developing a fostering service. Currently, fostering is illegal in Brazil, so they are working with the local government to pass the necessary legislation to enable fostering and give the children a stable home. (See September 2020 Signpost for more detail).

Margery Maughan

We had recent correspondence from Philip Maughan to Stranton congregation.

Coming up on March 18th is my Mam's 90th birthday. We are planning some zoom events including one where people can share stories and messages, so if you would like be like to be part of this or know people who are still around in Hartlepool who know my Mam from Stranton Church and its organisations, Bell ringing etc they are most welcome to take part. Please let me know so I can send zoom information nearer the time. Or they can send messages to me to pass on or even video messages or cards to my Mam's address:

Margery Maughan
12 Hawthorn Terrace
Shilbottle,
Alnwick
NE66 2XA

Or ring/text me on: 07846 378011

Mam is still living on her own, but Sue regularly keeps an eye on her and we all have frequent phone calls. My mam is doing well, very cheerful, a bit forgetful - but so am I!

We have weekly family quizzes so my mam can see her children and many of her grandchildren and great grandchildren on zoom, which she absolutely loves.

God bless love Philip

Mary Baines' Recipes

Jamaican Hot Pot

2 tablespoons oil
4 chicken drumsticks
4 chicken thighs
2 medium onions – peeled & sliced
1 red pepper - sliced
1 green pepper - sliced
1 inch fresh ginger root – peeled & chopped (or 1 teasp ground)
1 large tin of tomatoes
½ pint chicken stock
¼ cup lentils
1 clove garlic, crushed
12 oz tin sweetcorn

Seasoning

Heat oil in ovenproof casserole dish.
Fry chicken pieces until golden – drain off excess fat.
Add onion & peppers, fry gently
Add ginger, stock, lentils & tomatoes.
Season with salt & pepper then add garlic
Cover & place in preheated oven 190C, Gas 5 for about an hour until
vegetables are just tender & chicken juices run clear
Add tin of drained corn & cook for 5 minutes
Season further to taste – serve with noodles or crusty bread

Borrowdale Tea loaf

8oz SR flour	4oz currants
4oz raisons	1oz mixed peel
4oz brown sugar	1 egg

A little water

Place the fruit and sugar in a bowl & barely cover with water. Leave overnight
Next day put the flour into a basin and add beaten egg, along with the soaked fruit, sugar and water mixture. Mix well
Put in a greased loaf tin and bake for an hour at 180C Gas 4 on middle shelf. Leave in the tin until just cool, then turn out
Keep for a day or two & serve buttered.

What is God up to?

Hands up if you've asked that more than once over the past year. I can't see you, but if I were asking this to a room full of people (remember them?) I imagine I'd see a lot of hands shooting up.

It's instinctive. Our natural, human response when something awful happens is 'why, God?', 'why me/them?', 'why now?'. These responses demonstrate our faith; we believe God is somewhere in the picture, we just don't know where...

In his book *Raging with Compassion*, John Swinton, the former-mental-health-nurse-turned-academic-theologian, addresses how we cope with suffering.

He argues the 'why?' question comes from a cultural understanding that struggles are problems needing to be solved. We (perhaps subconsciously) assume that if we can just find the solution, the suffering will end.

But it's not that simple, is it. Even with modern medicines and in the UK one of the best welfare states in the world... still people are hungry. Still, a pandemic has halted life as we know it and caused intense suffering and loss for so many.

Asking 'why?' doesn't alleviate suffering. Neither does it practically help us cope with it. Perhaps we need a different response to suffering. John Swinton suggests that the early Christian communities were less concerned with the 'why?' and more concerned with asking 'how has God given us grace to get through this?' or 'how can we have the resilience as a community to cope with this?'

Think about all the times in the New Testament letters where suffering and persecution are mentioned. So many, and yet there is never an attempt to explain it. Instead, Christians are urged to be hopeful for Jesus' return. They are encouraged, comforted and advised about how they can stand firm and persevere – remember the armour of God passage at the end of Ephesians, or the promise of the Spirit in Romans 8 which 'groans' within us and gives us the words to pray when we don't know what to say. Because ultimately they knew that God's answer to human suffering was not to provide a neatly composed explanation. Instead, God acted. He came to share in the pain, and in what seemed like the biggest, most pointless defeat of all, through the cross He broke the power of evil and suffering.

If this act of 'foolishness', as St Paul puts it, is God's response and solution to suffering, perhaps it's not surprising that the way his followers can best respond to suffering also appears misguided. We should continue to pray, continue to worship and say words that speak of God's goodness. We should encourage each other and remind ourselves of the hope we have in Jesus. We should share each other's struggles and do what we can to help others connect with a God who loves them.

So much of this is already happening in our parishes. I give thanks for the deep commitment to prayer and worship demonstrated through the many online services and groups each week. St Aidan's Kitchen and homeless outreach continue to embody God's care. Countless phone calls and doorstep deliveries maintain our friendships.

Yes, we can cry out 'Why?' to God and the psalms are a great resource for expressing legitimate anger and fear. But let's also continue to look for the ways that God has already blessed and equipped us to persevere together through this challenging time.

Rachel Price

Dates for the Diary

COVID TIER FIVE - Lockdown

**During this period Stranton Church will be closed
for Public Worship.**

(from 9am to 10am on Sundays - Church is Open, for Private Prayer only)

Stranton Church

and Central Hartlepool group will continue online

**Church services until Lockdown and tier levels change following guidance
Streamed to Facebook...**

9.15am Holy Communion

St Luke's

10.45am Mass

St Aidan's

11.00am Morning Worship

Stranton

2:00 pm *Sunday Club with Kate*

<https://www.facebook.com/strantonsundayclub>

CELEBRATE!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

to

March

Teagan Bruce

Kayleigh Bruce

Erin Connell

Azam Chaichi

James Lawson

Tim Padgett

Rachel Price

Stella (Malory) Wilson-Boyd



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

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

Who's Who

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

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E-Mail: nshave1@btinternet.com

Curate

Revd Michelle Delves 40 Browning Avenue 723461

Burbank Community Church Worker & Curate

Revd Clive Hall 10 Clarkson Court 278504

Readers

Mary Tones 40a Blakelock Road 265625

Churches Together in Hartlepool

Secretary Susan Atkinson,
St Mary's RC

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Treasurer	David Craig 57 Claremont Drive 234279
Asst. Treasurer	Maureen Anderson 22 Thetford Road 871266
Loyalty Treasurer	Peter Anderson 22 Thetford Road 871266
Notice Sheet	The Office (Notices by the preceding Wednesday)
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Signpost Advertising	Maureen Anderson 22 Thetford Road 871266
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Magazine articles to the parish office by 16th of every month.

