

Stranton and Burbank Community

SIGNPOST



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

August 2024

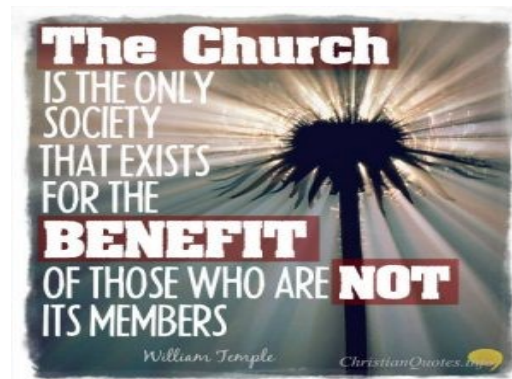
CULTURE SHOCK – Prioritising the Outsider...

(The musings of a priest)

A few years ago, I was able to attend the LYCiG conference (which is all about **Leading Your Church into Growth**), with a couple of colleagues in my curacy church. Recently, I revisited my notes and an article I wrote about our experiences of the conference.

Everything we took away from the conference, all of our thinking, seemed to revolve around one word – **culture**.

What became clear to us during the conference is that the culture of so many churches is inward focussed. William Temple once said, **“The church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members”**. The problem is that the focus or culture of so many churches is to look after those who are members, those who fill the pews each week and form the congregation, rather than prioritising the outsider.



Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep (Matthew 18:10-14) to show that the Kingdom of God is accessible to all, even those who have strayed from God's path. He uses the example of a shepherd (God) who has 100 sheep and one goes missing. The shepherd leaves the 99 others and searches high and low for the **one** lost sheep. He prioritises the outsider. Jesus stresses that when the shepherd finds the lost sheep he rejoices over it more than the 99 who did not go astray. This is how God will rejoice when even just a single person returns to Him.

But does the culture of the church make it difficult to access for those outside of it? What was so surprising is the number of ways our culture can do this without us even realising it!!

The language we use in our churches is great if you're familiar with it, and know what it means, but what if you're not? How accessible are the words we use in church, in our liturgy, in our prayers, in our hymns and worship music, to those who are not already members of the church? What about for those who have difficulty reading? Or where English is not their first language? In fact do we even understand all the words that we use ourselves? Do churches use too many words in their services? Do older hymns make it even more difficult for people to engage with the language?

This is just one example. Others raised at the conference include how a church welcomes people. Not just the way people are welcomed into the church, but whether the church is a welcoming and inviting space to be in. Is it accessible, and not just to those with obvious disabilities? What about for those who are different to us? Do we represent diversity in our churches? Or does the demographic of the church make it inaccessible to some people?

Perhaps some churches focus on establishing a presence in the community without first thinking what presence their community would most welcome. Where is the greatest need in our own community? What support can we provide as witnesses to the Kingdom of God?

How does our culture reflect our strategy? Peter Drucker is often quoted as saying, “**Culture eats strategy for breakfast.**” This quote is essentially saying that it doesn’t matter what things we do as a church, if our culture doesn’t back it up.



(What Drucker is believed to have actually said (in the Wall Street Journal back in 1991) was this: “*culture—no matter how defined—is singularly persistent*” but it doesn’t quite have the same ring to it.)

The challenge placed before us was to look closely at our culture and see where it does and does not prioritise the outsider. A review of our culture will help us see what things we do well, what might need to be done differently, and what things might need to change altogether. This challenge came across as exciting rather than threatening – a way to build for the future, confident that he who started a good work in us will complete it! (Philippians 1:6)

It’s something I hope to revisit further in the coming months, as we perhaps take a fresh look at our vision, our culture and our context, and seek out where God wants us to go next.

Grace and Peace

Revd John

From the Home Front

After a few days of very cool weather (so cool the heating came on!), the day started cloudy but developed into a humid sticky hot day. Taking advantage of this improved weather I rushed into the garden to do a couple of hours of weeding and cutting back, as my garden was so overgrown.

To finish off a well-earned lunch a couple of hours later, I just fancied a nectarine ripening on the window ledge of my conservatory. But on popping into the conservatory I found the blinds, windows, walls and part of the floor crawling with winged and unwinged ants! It was obviously 'swarm day'! This event usually occurs around June/July in hot humid weather in urban areas and it is part of the ants reproductive cycle. I should have known it would happen soon as I had found heaps of sandy debris appearing on the floor in the external corner of the conservatory.



Much as I am in awe of God's natural world – I really don't like ants! My dislike may have originated from my teenage years when I stayed with my parents living in Trinidad in the West Indies. The ants there were big and vicious - they took every opportunity to bite and it hurt! I cope with ants as long as they are outside but when they appear inside our house, which they started to do a few years ago, my reaction is to eradicate them. I use white vinegar spray to deter them and then traps and powder to stop them invading my kitchen and conservatory. There are daily skirmishes in late spring to catch the odd few scouting ants but we keep on top of the problem. However this year's swarm inside our house was the first, it was just too much for me to cope with. So I'm afraid the resulting annihilation was inevitable – out came the vacuum and out went the ants...

I do feel guilty harming living creatures – I scoop up bees, butterflies, woodlice and shoo out flies whenever I can. Yet a mass invasion requires a very different approach. I cannot justify my actions really, so I can only hope God forgives me for the massacre this week...

J.A.R.

Petertide Ordinations



This weekend has been so special! Yesterday I was Ordained Priest in the Church of England and today I presided at Holy Communion for the first time in my Parish. There are so many people to thank my family and my friends and those who have been apart of my journey in a season of my life. Who have encouraged me to be bold instead of staying behind the scenes. Those who have offered me a home in the UK. The countless people who have supported me through prayer and generous giving to serve missionally. I am so excited to see what God has next!

Bethany McNeeley arrived from Texas 11 years ago as part of the Tees Valley Youth4Christ Team. She had such a heart for the North East that she remained working in various Christian settings until starting her ordination training. She will complete her curacy at Usworth, Holy Trinity and St Michael and All Angels.



Andy McAllister from St Luke's Church was also Ordained a Deacon. Andy and his wife Lucy frequently led music worship online during Covid. He will be serving his curacy in the Parish of Jarrow and Simonside.

Jess Monopoli from St Aidan's and St Columba's Church and formerly with Communities of Hope, was Ordained a Priest and is now serving her curacy at St Mary's Cockerton, Darlington.



Emma Cain from St Luke's Church and Communities of Hope was Ordained a Deacon at York Minster before taking up a curacy in Yarm.

St Matthew's
Community Centre
Elwick Road



Coffee or Tea, Cake and Company

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

Saturday 7th September 2024

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

Summer Holiday Quiz

- S** Which **S** anointed David?
- U** Which **U** a captain, did David arrange to be killed?
- M** Which **M** was the son of Jonathan?
- M** Which **M** was Stephen the first of?
- E** Which **E** a prophet is the only bald man mentioned in the Bible?
- R** Which **R** was a covenant made between the Lord and Noah?

- H** Which **H** was married to Herod Agrippa?
- O** Which **O** is the direction Christian Soldiers go?
- L** Which **L** is 40 days and nights long?
- I** Which **I** has 66 chapters?
- D** Which **D** is patron saint of Wales?
- A** Which **A** spoke about a plumb line?
- Y** Which **Y** is a Northumbrian monk who lived in Brittany?
(Is this possible without Google?)

Hartlepool Ladies Choir Tower Restoration Appeal Concert



Hartlepool Ladies' Choir was formed in 2002 under the direction of David Gibson and seeks to support charities and community organisations across the town. Donations of over £400 were received towards the Tower Appeal.

They performed a selection of songs from their extensive repertoire of music from shows, movies, classical and folk songs plus chart toppers as diverse as Hallelujah, Lullaby of Broadway, The Winner Takes It All, When Will I See You Again and Bring Me Sunshine.

The Choir always welcomes visitors/new members. You can simply go along any Thursday evening to Grace Church Hartlepool (formerly Grange Road Methodist Church) Community Centre, Tankerville Street. 7:30 till 9:00pm. You will be made very welcome, they'll 'buddy you up' with someone to make you feel at ease and you can listen in or join in if you want to.



Ward Jackson Primary Summer Update

Fabulous stay and play in partnership with @playouthartlepool focussing on maths in outdoor play. Enjoying nature and applying maths skills at the same time, all through play #wardjacksonway



Aurora class had a fantastic time at Summerhill Country Park and Visitor Centre today. The children developed their team work skills by building a den together. They then played woodlands games, all with natural materials, learning that fun can be had without electronics or plastic. We finished with a play in the park after lunch. A full filled time had by everyone! 😊 #wardjacksonway



Blanchland class had a fantastic opportunity to go sailing around the Marina. They learned all about the area and the skills needed to sail. Thank you so much to the Yacht Club for an excellent morning. 🚤 #wardjacksonway



Ward Jackson Sports Day 2024! 🏆 The children had a great day. It was lovely to see lots of great encouragement and kind words of praise given to each other throughout each activity. Well done everyone, we are so proud of the sportsmanship on show all day. 😊
[#wardjacksonway](#)



Thank you to everyone who came to make our Summer Sizzler a success. We braved the ever changing weather and enjoyed time together as a community. Thank you to Laurel Catering for the food and parent, Siobhan, for the Ward Jackson cakes! Amazing! [#wardjacksonway](#)



Staff Farewells

Saying goodbye to two of our most treasured staff members. Mrs. Lesley Carroll has been here 27 years and Mrs. Sharon Constantine a decade. They have supported thousands of children and their legacy of positivity and compassion will last many lifetimes over. Thank you both for everything. Love the whole Ward Jackson family.



Mrs Hunter is leaving Ward Jackson after 8 years – she will be greatly missed.



The children enjoyed a special treat from Mrs Carroll, Mrs Constantine & Mrs Hunter! We will miss you all! 🌀💙💛

Organ Recital Saturday 29th June 2024

Daniel Cook is Master of the Choristers and Organist of Durham Cathedral. He performs recitals, concerts and recordings, as well as being a conductor, teacher and singer. Until he came back to Durham, Daniel was principal organist at Westminster Abbey and Assistant Director of Music. He accompanied the Choir in services, concerts and tours across Europe and the USA, also in Buckingham Palace and the Royal Albert Hall, and in recordings for Hyperion Records. Before then Daniel was Organist and Master of the Choristers of St David's Cathedral and Artistic Director of the St David's Cathedral Festival, working with BBC Radio and Television, touring in Italy and performing with the BBC singers. Daniel was previously Assistant Director of Music and principal organist at Salisbury Cathedral.



After being introduced to the Organ at Stranton Parish Church by Alf Peacock, Daniel received his early musical education at Durham Cathedral with Keith Wright. Following a year as Organ Scholar at Worcester Cathedral, he studied at the Royal Academy of Music where he studied with Nicolas Kynaston, James O'Donnell and Patrick Russill taking master classes with many of the world's leading organists including Marie-Claire Alain, Lionel Rogg and Jon Laukvik. Daniel graduated with first-class honours in July, 2003. Daniel has twice been a finalist in the St Alban's International Organ Competition, has played across the UK, Europe and Australia, performed in most of the cathedrals in Britain, the Royal Albert Hall, the Royal Festival Hall, also at the City of London Festival, St David's Cathedral Festival, with Onyx Brass in The Hythe Festival and The London Mozart Players in JAM on the Marsh. His work as an accompanist has taken him all over the world. Other projects have included a performance of the complete organ works of Olivier Messiaen in six recitals, a solo DVD from Westminster Abbey, released in 2018, and CD recordings of the complete organ music of Charles Stanford, Herbert Brewer, Herbert Sumsion, George Dyson, Walter Alcock and William Harris.

St Matthew's Community Centre Tidy up

A huge thank you to all those who turned out to tidy up the paths and areas around St Matthew's Community Centre. A huge effort which is appreciated by all the users of the Centre. A tasty treat was a reward for all their hard work.





Summer Holiday Quiz Answers

S	Which S anointed David?	Samuel
U	Which U a captain did David arrange to be killed?	Uriah
M	Which M was the son of Jonathan?	Mephibosheth
M	Which M was Stephen the first of?	Martyr
E	Which E a prophet is the only bald man mentioned in the Bible?	Elisha
R	Which R was a covenant made between the Lord and Noah?	Rainbow
H	Which H was married to Herod Agrippa?	Herodias
O	Which O is the direction Christian Soldiers go?	Onward
L	Which L is 40 days and nights long?	Lent
I	Which I has 66 chapters?	Isaiah
D	Which D is patron saint of Wales?	David
A	Which A spoke about a plumb line?	Amos
Y	Which Y is a Northumbrian monk who lived in Brittany?	Ywi (sometimes called Iwi or Iwig or Iwigius)

**Are you planning a special celebration or party
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Back to Basics

If you are wondering what your purpose in life is. Or you have been a follower of Jesus for what seems a life time, and you have lost your way. You may wonder what you are supposed to be doing in this crazy world!

Then sometimes it helps to go back to basics! Strip it all back down to the main thing.

Jesus tells us in simple terms how we are to live.

“You are to love the Lord Yahweh, your God, with a passionate heart, from the depths of your soul, with your every thought, and with all your strength. This is the great and supreme commandment.

And the second is this:

‘You must love your neighbour in the same way you love yourself.’ You will never find a greater commandment than these.” Mark 12:30-31 TPT

So we are to;

Love God

Love ourselves

Love others

Now it's easy to Love God as He's an awesome, all powerful, all knowing, creator God.

Is it as easy to love ourselves? Not really! Why? I would like to suggest it's because we think it's not important. It's selfish etc.

How can we love others or take care of others or show compassion and kindness to others if we are not doing that to ourselves?

Maybe the world would look a little different, if we loved ourselves the way God teaches us to and we would be able to love others a whole lot better!

What does pure love like? 1 Corinthians ch 13 The Passion Version

“Love is large and incredibly patient.

Love is gentle and consistently kind to all.

It refuses to be jealous when blessing comes to someone else.

Love does not brag about one's achievements nor inflate its own importance.

Love does not traffic in shame and disrespect, nor selfishly seek its own honour.

Love is not easily irritated or quick to take offense.

Love joyfully celebrates honesty and finds no delight in what is wrong.

Love is a safe place of shelter, for it never stops believing the best for others.

Love never takes failure as defeat, for it never gives up.”

I love how this version describes love. If we read it as those are all the attributes of God, then it shows how beautifully and deeply, He loves us!

If you read it as how we love others, it immediately shows us our short comings of how we don't love others the way God loves us.

If we read it as a list of how we should love ourselves, how uncomfortable does that make us feel?

Are we patient and kind to ourselves?

Do we live in shame and disrespect ourselves?

Do we remember the long list of all we have done wrong?

Are we easily defeated?

I think for me it boils down to, do I know how much I am loved by God?

If I believe, He loves and believes in me.

If I believe, He knows the worst parts of me and still loves me.

If I believe, He is for me and not against me.

If I believe, He never gives up on me.

Then, and only then, I will love myself and let His love flow through me so that God's love can reach out to others.

Thank you God, for your great love.

Thank you that you believe in me.

Thank you that when I love myself as you love me, it will be easier to love others.

Amen

Ang Hall

Central Hartlepool Group Mission Activities

Children & Families Work

The children and families work for Central Hartlepool Group Mission continues to be busy. Activities include:

- ◇ Assemblies in 5 different schools, taking RE lessons as requested and organising class visits to churches.
- ◇ Café Craft over half terms. This is where families come to St Matthew's Community Centre for refreshments, craft activities and to chat.
- ◇ At St Aidan's Kitchen making tea and coffee and speaking to the families that go there getting to know them.
- ◇ A weekly RE Club at Stranton Primary School including using Godly Play. The weekly RE club at Jesmond Garden stopped this term as there wasn't anyone to help. However I am pleased to say it will restart again in September.
- ◇ Easter and Summer HAF Holiday Clubs for children including a hot meal. At the Easter Holiday Club this year we looked at Holy Week. As I write we are in the process of organising a 2 week Summer Holiday Club for 4 hours, for 4 days each week. This time looking at God's wonderful world. There will be a daily Bible story. Details are on the Hartlepool Council website. Spaces are available to book children in. This is a wonderful way to enable us to reach out children and parents in the community. Particularly for those who might struggle with providing lunch for their kids over the school holidays.
- ◇ Toddlers is thriving with about 24 children attending each week.

So overall the work is busy and fruitful. As always my sincere thanks to all those who help with this important ministry, without which it can't happen. Also to all those who uphold it in their prayers.

Blessings,

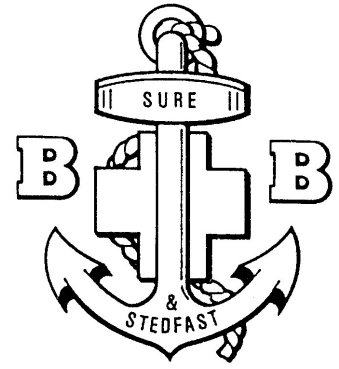
Hayley

Community Children & Families Worker

Central Hartlepool Group Mission



Boys Brigade



Our Anchor Boys were visited by Superheroes on Friday night.



Summer Programme (Weather permissible)

Anchor Boys have visited Stranton Church where they heard about the broken statue of St Margaret or St George and held a Superheroes night at St Matthew's CC.

Juniors have enjoyed trips to Seaton Carew plus ice creams, the Blue Lagoon, Stranton Church including grave rubbing (One boy found his own name on a gravestone - very spooky!) and McDonalds.

The Company Lads have visited the Blue Lagoon to have a BBQ, Castle Eden Dene, Wynyard Park and Go Climb.

Pictures of all these activities are on our Facebook page and have been in last month's edition of this magazine.

St Matthew's CC Tidy Up

Ten Junior and Company Lads helped to remove the undergrowth around St Matthew's producing 20 plus bags of rubbish to take to the tip. Well done to all concerned and a big thankyou to Maureen Anderson and Carol Laud for providing the workers with some edible treats.

Camp

Everything is all go as we prepare for our camp at Hesley Scout Centre, Chapelton, South Yorkshire from the 22nd to 27th July.

The younger leaders have planned the camp visit including the programme, menu and transport arrangements.

The devotions on the life of King David were prepared by Joseph.

All we need is some fine weather and Boys Brigade spirit de corps and a great time will be had by all.

George Bainbridge

Let your own light shine...

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God – your playing small doesn't serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people will not feel insecure around you.



We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not in just some of us; it is in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

Nelson Mandela Inaugural speech, 1994

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St Matthew's
Community Centre
Elwick Road



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Saturday 5th October 2024

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Are you in tune?

How are we all in coping with the modern trend of Worship Songs? Are we in tune with them or do we wish we could go back to the days of four square harmonies of the old and then familiar 1933 Methodist Hymn Book? Gosh! That's almost one hundred years ago, and we are now worshipping in the era of Singing the Faith. Some of the old favourites have been cast aside, sunk with little trace, but often with our misgivings on their loss.

But what has replaced them. Are they all fit for purpose or some just a "pop-up" version, here today and gone just as quickly. Do they all fulfil a purpose in the way in which we worship in these times. One might ask "Is the Methodist Mantra - Born in Song, still relevant today".

I think the question in mind is how we, those who might hanker after the good old days, can adapt to the new forms of "worship songs" rather than traditional hymns. Do you think we can, might be a more appropriate question.

But really, what is the difference, hymn or song? I suppose the style of music particularly, following more modern rhythmic patterns and abandoning, to a great degree, the formal harmonisation of the melody.

What is new in that? Perhaps similar arguments were being put forward in the mid nineteenth century with the explosion of Mission Songs from various quarters, particularly in North America, each style dealing you might say in the musical vernacular of that time and place.

I find it interesting to look back through some of those old Mission Song books to see how folk made their worship relevant to their particular situations. In particular we can look at the collections published by Sankey and Moody and General William Booth of the Salvation Army with his years of evangelising in the Methodist Church and using on numerous occasions well known Music Hall tunes of the day to reinforce his message.

The outrage shown at the time by musical members of the Church Establishment showed no bounds in castigating and ostracising the use of such music.

It has been said that the upshot from both Sankey and Moody and the Salvation Army in particular was that the population of Hell had been reduced by a million folk saved by such an approach to delivering the gospel.

So are we in the same mind-set today in terms of how we approach the introduction of new material into our regular worship. Indeed if we look at the current edition of Singing the Faith there is a fair scattering of "new style" songs or hymns.

On the down side I see one of the drawbacks to their inclusion is the seeming need for a new approach to their accompaniment and for those choosing such to be aware of some of the inherent differences and sometimes difficulties, between playing them with organ or piano accompaniment. The music will very often require different techniques and approach from the accompanist and which may not easily be achievable. What may sound very acceptable via Songs of Praise and the like may quite easily fall apart with inadequate backing (not necessarily the fault of the accompanist.) Adequate time is required for the preparation, and practice to get the full benefit from the song, not easily achieved when the accompanist may only get the details on the Thursday evening before the service.

My final question therefore is "How do you see the development of these new songs in our worship and how should we approach their introduction?"

Jeff Parsons in conversation with J Cornelius Starbuck June 2024.
(A member of the Methodist church & regular worshipper in churches in Bristol and Bath area with connections to members of Stranton Church)

CELEBRATE!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

to

August

Lorelai Anderson
Steph Boyd
Michael Cartwright
Ruth Smith
Andrew Milner
Linda Southgate
Jordan Thornhill
Rohan Wanduragala
David Wilson



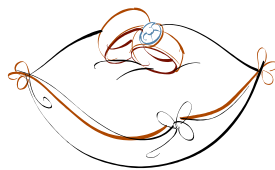
**Wedding Anniversary
August**

Andrew & Jacqui Rogers

Angela & David Craig

Tim & Vikki Craig

Rebecca & Christopher Dean



If you have something to celebrate we would love to share it - email
admin@stranton-church.org.uk
or phone 894006.

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

Dates for the Diary

Advance diary dates for September

Sun 9 th	St Aidan's Patronal Joint Service	St Aidan's Church 10.45am
Mon 2 nd	Licencing of Revd Becky Reeve	St Aidan's Church 7.00pm
Sat 7 th	Coffee, Cake & Company	St Matthew's CC 2.00-4.00pm
Mon 23 rd	PCC meeting	St Matthew's CC 7.00pm
Sun 29 th	Harvest Service	
Thurs 12 th	Wings of Worship Course,	St Luke's 6.30 for 7.00pm start

Training Opportunities

If anyone would be interested in doing the Wings of Worship training course, which prepares people to help lead worship and deliver the occasional sermon/talk, please have a chat with Revd John before booking your place. It runs over 5 Thursday evenings starting September 12th (with an optional 6th session covering communion by extension on 24th October). Venue: St Luke's, Time: 6:30pm for coffee and a 7.00pm start (aiming to finish approx. 9.00pm).

ALL SAINTS STRANTON CRAFT FAIR

In aid of Tower Restoration Appeal
900th Anniversary

Saturday 26th October 2024
10am—3.00pm



For further information contact Trish on 07305 550009 or
Email: admin@stranton-church.org.uk

Who's Who

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