Stranton and Burbank Community

SIGNPOST



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

June 2025

We are no longer our own but yours – a covenant renewal… (The musings of a priest)

As I write, we started the new PCC year at St Luke's and Stranton with the first meetings after our APCMs this week, and I thought it would be good to open our meetings by recommitting ourselves to serving God and each other. When I was training for ministry, our first residential one year used the Methodist Covenant Service as an act of worship as we started the New Year, and Common Worship has a similar service within its liturgy.

It reminds us of the Covenant God first made with Israel. A Covenant that was renewed in Christ – his life, his ministry, his death and his resurrection. A new covenant open to all people, providing the opportunity to set us free from sin and the power it has over us, uniting us in love and obedience. In this covenant, God promises us a new life in and through Christ, and we promise to live no longer for ourselves but for God, putting him first in all that we do.

The Covenant Renewal is something which I find very powerful. It's almost like hitting the reset button as we choose to put behind us all that is wrong in our lives, recommitting ourselves to God. We seek forgiveness for those times where, like so many before us: we have been slow to listen and learn from Christ, where we have been reluctant to follow him or afraid to bear the cross; when our worship has been scarce, our prayers selfish and formal, when we have neglected fellowship and grace, and hesitated to share the Gospel with others; we have misused the gifts God gives us, turn a blind eye to our responsibilities, allow injustice to happen, or simply haven't shared His love with those around us.

In the Covenant Renewal there are some words which help to ground me in the role that God calls me to – words that can help all of us in how we are called to serve:

> Christ has many services to be done:
> some are easy, others are difficult;
> some bring honour, others bring reproach;
> some are suitable to our natural inclinations and material interests,
> others are contrary to both;
> in some we may please Christ and please ourselves;
> in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves.
> Yet the power to do all these things is given to us in Christ,
> who strengthens us.

If we truly honour the call God places on us then we will be content with the place and work he gives us to do, knowing that he himself is sufficient reward.

I leave you with these words, this prayer that we say all together as part of the covenant renewal. A prayer that we can use to ground us, whenever we doubt our place and purpose in God's big picture:

I am no longer my own but yours.
Your will, not mine, be done in all things,
wherever you may place me,
in all that I do and in all that I may endure;
when there is work for me and when there is none;
when I am troubled and when I am at peace.
Your will be done
when I am valued and when I am disregarded;
when I find fulfilment and when it is lacking;
when I have all things and when I have nothing.
I willingly offer all that I have and am
to serve you, as and where you choose.
Glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours.
May it be so for ever.
Let this covenant now made on earth
be fulfilled in heaven. Amen.

Grace and peace, Revd John



From the Home Front

Last Sunday at the Annual Parish Council Meeting in church we discussed the newly collated Electoral Roll. This contains the details of all who are part of our Church Family. Over the years the numbers on the Electoral Roll have decreased from over 200 to less than 60. In the past it contained the names of many couples who lived outside of the Parish but had attended church for six months in order to qualify to be married in Stranton. Due a change in Church of England rules this is no longer necessary due to the introduction of 'qualifying connections' to the church being introduced. Also many older members of the church family have died or gone into care homes; in addition some of our brothers and sisters in Christ have moved away from the town - hence the fall in numbers.

Last weekend also saw a family celebration in our household when my husband had a milestone birthday. We had friends and family arrive from the south of England, the north of Scotland, the west side of England and the east (well Seaton!) to spend parts of the weekend and especially Sunday afternoon eating, drinking and catching up with each other as well as playing alongside the children. It was an opportunity for our grandsons to meet up with great-aunties and great-uncles who they see less often and due to the boys young ages they had almost forgotten due to time and distances. My hubby enjoyed receiving cards and electronic messages from our extended family scattered across the British Isles and the world! The month of May has been filled with milestone family birthdays and celebrations – our nephew in New Zealand hit 50, my older bother turned 80 and our youngest daughter has a 'between' birthday. Once again loving messages have bounced around the globe feeding into parties and special holidays. So much love was involved to make these members of our family feel special and cared for.

Unfortunately within every family, including our church family, various disagreements and misunderstandings erupt from time to time. Harsh words may be spoken, members may not speak to each other or limit communication due to inflicted hurts of 'omission' or 'commission'. But Jesus left us a huge commandment 'to love one another', with the extra attachment 'to treat one another as we would wish to be treated'. We cannot ignore His words.
Over the years I have said to my children that I don't always like them - due to their actions or words - but I always love them, regardless of their actions or words….
Not always easy, but through God's grace it is always possible with prayer and forgiveness. There is no greater blessing than a strong united family, but it takes love and work from each one of us to achieve.

J.A.R.

Welcome to our new curate Claire Mead





Hi! My name is Claire Mead and I'm really looking forward to joining you all at St Luke's and All Saints, Stranton as your new curate this July!

I began my professional career as a Secondary School teacher and soon found myself leading youth/schools work for Christian charities. I worked for ecumenical projects in Norfolk and Northumberland and parish churches. My call to ordination has been a persistent one and I very much felt that it was the right time for me to explore it again after Covid restrictions started to reduce in 2021.

I've really enjoyed the last two years of my training at Cranmer Hall (Durham) on a Context based pathway. I've loved learning and studying with others! I've lived in the village of Gainford and ministered in Gainford (my sending church), Ingleton, Winston and Staindrop parishes and GATHER church plant, as well as studying for three days a week at Cranmer.

In my spare time, I love singing and recently I've sung in a local community choir. I play the flute and piano (but I'm very rusty on the piano!). I learnt to ring church bells as a teenager in Rutland where I grew up and I enjoy ringing when I can on Sunday mornings! I look forward to exploring the bell towers at Stranton and St Aidan's! On my day off, you'll probably find me reading a novel in a coffee shop with a delicious piece of cake.

I'm really look forward to getting to know you all and I'm excited for what God has prepared for this next chapter in my ministry journey. I'm being ordained as deacon in Durham Cathedral on Sunday 29th June. If you'd like to come along, you'll be most welcome. The service starts at 10am. Do get there in good time to secure a seat! Revd John has copies of my ember card if you'd like one.

With my prayers and best wishes,
Claire Mead

While Claire will be formally licensed to the parishes of St Luke's and Stranton, in the same way that Revd John is, she will be joining Revd John and Revd Becky in serving across all the Central Hartlepool Group churches!!

.Maundy Thursday 17th April
The King at Durham Cathedral

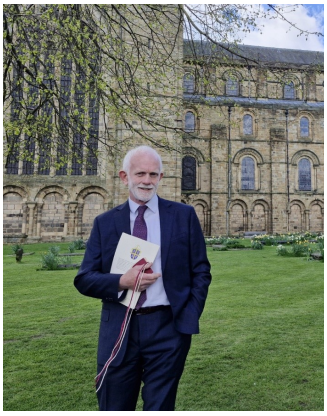




Congratulations to all of the recipients from Durham Diocese who have been chosen to receive this year's Maundy Money. His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Queen attended the service on 17th April, at Durham Cathedral, where they presented the Maundy Money to 152 recipients, honouring their exceptional Christian service.
The last time the Maundy Service was held in Durham Cathedral was 1967.

Recipients from Hartlepool

David Craig



One of the Recipients was from our Church Family, David Craig, who has been a member of Stranton Church since 1980. He has been a member of PCC since the mid-1980s, editing Signpost and helping distribute home communion. He sang in the Church choir and then music group. He has been our Parish Treasurer since 1991 ensuring the Church meets its financial obligations and since 2010 its public accountability as a registered charity. Over the years he has, with support of the PCC and the Buildings and Finance Committee, overseen grant applications and managed our Church funds to ensure we were able to carry out major repairs and restorations including the South Clerestory roof and recently the Tower, with oversight of the finances involved in our lighting upgrade project, apron extension to the chancel, servery and accessible toilet development, audio visual systems and of course the "bells project". In addition, he was the first independent examiner and governance adviser when the Kilimatinde Trust was established. David also worked closely on the initial governance and financial management of the Community of Hope team and continues to be the conduit of finances for the Central Group Mission Project. He is currently involved in Parish IT and website management.
In terms of wider voluntary community service David was an active College

Governor and is currently Chair of Ward Jackson CE Primary. Along with his wife Angela he has helped with Christian Aid annual collections. They have together used the blessing of a large house to offer hospitality to Texan student mission team visitors, Ministry Experience Volunteers, returning mission partners and now a Ukrainian refugee family. In recent times they have also assisted with the delivery of our Children's Holiday programmes.

The words of the Lord High Almoner, the Right Reverend Graham Usher, spoken at the start of the Durham Cathedral service resonated with David: "All the recipients here are representatives of the volunteers in all their Churches."

David feels that his own service and inspiration came through his own sense of thankfulness at the redeeming work of Christ but also in acknowledging the hard work and unsung, unrecognised voluntary service previously completed by parishioners like Chris and Nance Applegarth and John and Mary Baines: and his work has been possible with the unstinting support of Assistant Treasurers over the years including Evelyn Hartley, Heather McPhee and now Maureen Anderson. This honour is for people like them, as much as for him.

David's wish for the future role of volunteers is that all who serve should do so with a sense of thankfulness and joy, not of duty and obligation, and for any who like himself may have been relatively privileged in their opportunities and "life chances", to use those gifts, experiences and resources to serve and benefit others.

Andrew Rees



Andrew, a dedicated member of Hart Church in Hartlepool, has been honoured with the prestigious Maundy Money in recognition of his great example of 'faith in action' as he serves church and the local community.

Andrew has called Hartlepool home for nearly 50 years. He was the former headteacher of Eldon Grove Primary School. he retired from teaching but never stepped away from working with young people. As a mentor for young families at Hart Church, he plays a key role in running the innovative 3@4 family service, a creative and welcoming initiative for families celebrating baptisms. Alongside fellow honouree Anne Johnson, he helps bring the service to life with churchyard trails and interactive performances. Together they organise Stir-up Sunday, where families mix Christmas cake ingredients, with children hunting for hidden ingredients around the church.

Upon returning from a trip away, he found the letter from the palace waiting for him amid the chaos of a house move. "I was honoured and very pleased," he said. "Being a Christian and working in a Christian school means I value the monarchy and the traditions that make this country special."

Anne Johnson

Anne is a member of Hart Church and was formerly the Headteacher of St Helen's Primary School. She has played a major role linking the church with community activities coming alongside the vulnerable, sick and isolated and also strengthening links with schools, Guides, Scouts and Cubs. She has helped to develop the eco work in the churchyard with Andrew Rees. Anne has also been a member of and Lay Chair of Hartlepool Deanery Synod for many years.



Brian Hays

Brian has been a member of St Aidan's Church since his youth. He is a PCC member and a long standing member of Deanery Synod. He is a Sacristan and MC (Master of Ceremonies) who ensures that the altar area is dressed in the correct liturgical colours during the church year plus preparing the bread and wine for the eucharist. He has assisted the officiating clergy at the altar for most of his adult life to make sure that all runs smoothly within a service.

Brian is also a Governor at St Aidan's CE Primary School and assists when the school comes into church to celebrate the eucharist.

Ann Turner

She is a Church Warden at St Hilda's and has been a member of their PCC for many years. She is a keen advocate of the opening up of this historic church for all to enjoy.

Ann was the Clerk to School Governors until her retirement a year ago.

The Fulthorpe Chapel Quiz

F Which **F** is the number of days in lent?
U Abraham came from here-**U**?
L Which **L** walked past the victim of a mugging on the Jericho road?
T What did Thomas and Esau have in common **T**?
H Which **H** was the mother of Samuel?
O Which **O** a saint was a Northumbrian King?
R In which **R** was there much weeping?
P Amos and Hosea are considered to be minor **P**_____
E Which **E** was fed by ravens?

C What very dangerous job did Nehemiah have-**C**?
H Which **H** was a prophet in the early reign of Darius?
A Which **A** died on a Greek cross?
P Which **P** converted a high ranking Ethiopian?
E Which **E** was the father of Methuselah?
L Jesus healed 10 of these-**L**?

Kilimatinde Trust Update

Thank you all for your continued prayers and support for The Kilimatinde Trust over the years. The Trust is still active and will be 30 years old in 2027 when The Kilimatinde Mission Hospital will be 100 years old.

We continue to stay connected and work closely with Bishop John Luppa and the communities of Kilimatinde and Manyoni. Where we facilitate medical elective placements in their hospitals, enabling students to learn about delivering health care in a vastly different context than their own.

We still support student sponsorship for primary and secondary pupils at the St John's School.

In addition, we have been working on and supporting some environmental improvement projects and a cashew nut project which is helping with vital funds to the hospital. We also continue to work closely with those working on solar projects.

There is a new initiative in the village of Laminiti called "Empowering The Future". Festo and Grace Kanungha have been working on this along with Mike Rowe.

Our Burns Unit which opened in 2017 has been very successful. We have significantly reduced the incidence of burns in the area, through education and training. Interburns, an international burns charity, has now opened a regional hub in Tanzania which will further enable training for doctors, surgeons and nurses. In fact the whole team has been upskilled in life saving and rehabilitation to those who have suffered burns. We continue to commit £3000 per year to the hospital to enable it to offer the first 10 days of treatment to be free for those with burns injuries. This has been truly a life saver for many and stops people from delaying treatment.

Our project for 2024 was to raise enough money to enable the hospital to replace their anaesthetic machine which was really needed. We were also able to provide new mattresses for the school dormitory.

Our Trustees of The Kilimatinde Trust are now:
Revd Stephen Taylor, Chair
Jill Barrett, admin /hospital link
Mike Rowe, school link /and technology support
Angie Riley GP, student pastoral support and communications.

Thank you again for your continued support and prayers
Jill Barrett, Admin to the Kilimatinde Trust.

Friend or Follower?

A follower of Jesus often follows at a distance.
A friend of Jesus walks side-by-side in perfect harmony with Him.
A follower feels they should or ought to do what Jesus does .
A friend talks and turns to Him and says “What do you need from me today?”
A follower lives for Jesus.
A friend lives with Jesus.
A follower copies Jesus.
A friend compliments what Jesus does.
A follower often talks at Jesus.
A friend will talk and then listen to Jesus .

A letter from Jesus

Dear Friend,
Do you know how loved you are? Do you know how much I delight in your company?
I only desire your friendship. The pressure you put on yourself is never from me. You are my beautiful creation, whom I love to keep company with.
It’s time to take off the old rigid, religious, uniform. Let me dress you in my robe of righteousness it’s incredibly light, breathable and so flexible.

My friend, I’ve been noticing that you are back listening to the lies of the enemy. Please remember his voice is loud, brash and condemning.
I speak in gentle whispers.
I encourage and build you up and yes sometimes convict you.
Remember the enemy is a liar and a manipulator. He always discourages. So when those lies come, you need to put him in his place. He hates it when you quote my word to him.
Remember nothing can separate you from my love, that’s the truth, my friend.

Nothing you have ever done can make me love you less and nothing you will ever do will make me love you more.

Keep walking with me, dear one. I am your constant. I have never let you down and I won’t start now.

When you beat yourself up and don’t love yourself and are self-critical, it hurts my heart. It’s the same when you criticise others. They too are my beloved creation. Show grace to yourself and extend my grace to others.
Love the you that I have created you to be and love the people I bring into your life.

Love you
From **Jesus**

Central Hartlepool Group Mission Team

Spring/Summer 2025
It's been a busy and productive time of year over Easter for the children and families work. In addition to the usual outreach it was a pleasure to welcome the whole of Stranton Primary School and Jesmond Gardens Primary School to All Saints and St Luke's for Easter Celebrations.

HAF Holiday Club Central Hartlepool Group Mission Project April 22nd to 25th

A large focus of work was on organizing and implementing the Easter holiday club for children at St Matthew's Community Centre run in association with Hartlepool Council. It was lovely to see the children enjoying themselves, having a delicious hot meal and pudding for lunch and trying various craft and games activities. They also learnt about the Easter Story.



Hungry children and adults queue for lunch after an active morning



Physical activities for all ages.

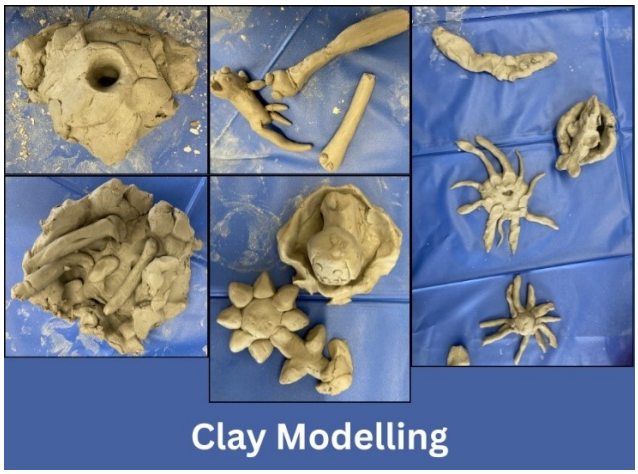


Games to challenge the mind!





Art and creativity were central activities during the week.





My sincere thanks to all the workers who ensured things ran smoothly, without them it could never have happened.

The plan is to hopefully run an 8 day holiday club over the summer. So watch this space.

Many thanks to everyone who supports this ministry by volunteering or prayer. It is much appreciated.

Hayley Liversidge
Community Children & Families Worker

St Matthew's
Community Centre
Elwick Road

Coffee Cake Company

Coffee or Tea, Cake and Company
2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Saturday 7th June 2025
Saturday 5th July 2025
A time to spend together,
meet new people, make new friends



Are you planning a special celebration or party and looking for a venue?

Have you thought about

St Matthew's Community Centre?

We have 2 large halls which can accommodate up to 140 persons as well as 1 large and 2 small kitchens for your catering needs. One hall is even big enough to house a bouncy castle – ideal for children's parties.

We also have our own private car park and some outdoor space if you fancy al fresco fun for your guests.

If you would like further information please call: Trish Playfor (01429 894006) or 07305 550009 during office hours, and we will be happy to help.

Steven McConnell

Roofing Contractor

37 Greta Avenue
Hartlepool
TS25 5LE

Tel: 01429 221784
Fax: 01429 281609
Mobile 07850 925183

Member of the National Federation of Roofing Contractors





BRABINER CARPETS

249 – 251 YORK ROAD
HARTLEPOOL
TS26 9AD

TEL: (01429) 272298



LET US HELP YOU GET THROUGH YOUR LOSS

We'll guide and assist you through all the funeral arrangements.
Call us 24 hours a day.

MASON'S & MEYNELL
FUNERAL DIRECTORS
01429 862021

129 Park Road, Hartlepool.
TS26 9HT

Dignity
CARING FUNERAL SERVICES



Do you need a Helping Hand?

Our Stranton care team has been providing award winning quality home care since 1989.

We offer you a one to one live in care service which enables you or your loved one to remain at home with compassion and dignity.

To find out more, call: 0808 180 1033 or visit: www.helpinghands.co.uk

Keith Walker
Ophthalmic Opticians

28 Victoria Road, Hartlepool
Tel: 01429 275551

Hartlepool & District Hospice

Provides free palliative care for patients.
Offers of voluntary help are always welcome ,
as are donations.
Please contact us at:

Alice House Wells Avenue
Hartlepool. TS24 9DA
Tel: 01429 855555

Stranton Business Centre

Accountancy, Taxation and Payroll

49 Stockton Road
Hartlepool
TS25 1TX

Telephone: 01429 280444
Email: office.admin@strantonbusiness.co.uk
www.strantonbusiness.co.uk

Joanna's Poochies Paradise

147 Elwick Road
Hartlepool
TS26 9BW

Pet Shop
&
Dog Grooming

01429 270056

MOVING HOME?

Does your property need an

ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE?

Then call Andrew Rogers at
Energy Education North
On 07831 314375

energy.education@btconnect.com

Ward Jackson CE Primary Update

Norlina girls had a fantastic time attending the Disney Football Festival at High Tunstal School this afternoon.
The girls demonstrated great sportsmanship, participating in all of the events with smiles and giggles.
Making Ward Jackson proud!
#wardjacksonway



Just a few from our wonderful VE Day Celebration. We had a special worship, took part in the national two minute silence, had a street party, rode donkeys, went on the rides, listened to live music and met the police and fire brigade! Thank you to everyone who helped make today a really special memory for the children. Celebrating in such a big way helped us to understand the importance of the day and complemented our learning into WW2.
#wardjacksonway











Congratulations to out Year 6 pupils on completing their SATs this week. They really made us proud with their confidence, ability and perseverance. Well done to all our staff who helped them along the way, especially Miss. Petch and Miss. Graham. Here they all are enjoying a Pizza Hut buffet as a treat after their final test paper this morning. Staff and customers have commented on how polite and well behaved they are, again, doing us proud!
#wardjacksonway





The Fulthorpe Chapel Quiz Answers

F	Which F is the number of days in lent?	**Forty**
U	Abraham came from here-U?	**Ur**
L	Which L walked past the victim of a mugging on the Jericho road?	**Levite**
T	What did Thomas and Esau have in common T?	**Both were twins**
H	Which H was the mother of Samuel?	**Hannah**
O	Which O a saint was a Northumbrian King?	**Oswald**
R	In which R was there much weeping?	**Rama**
P	Amos and Hosea are considered to be minor	**Prophets**
E	Which E was fed by ravens?	**Elijah**
C	What very dangerous job did Nehemiah have-C?	**Cupbearer to a King**
H	Which H was a prophet in the early reign of Darius?	**Haggai**
A	Which A died on a Greek cross?	**St Andrew**
P	Which P converted a high ranking Ethiopian?	**Philip**
E	Which E was the father of Methuselah?	**Enoch**
L	Jesus healed 10 of these-L?	**Lepers**

Instead of saying, "I know what it feels like", let's say "I cannot imagine your heartbreak".
Instead of saying, "You're strong, you'll get through this, let's say " You'll hurt, and I'll be here.
Instead of saying, "You look like you're doing well, Let's say, "How are you holding up today?"
Instead of saying, "Healing takes time", let's say "Healing has no timeline".
Instead of saying, "Everything happens for a reason, let's say "This must feel so terribly senseless right now".
And when there are no words to say at all, you don't need to try and find some. Love speaks in silences too.
~ 'Words' by Ullie-Kaye
~ Art by Jennifer Yoswa



The Anger of Jesus

It was never the lost ones,
kneeling in the dust,
eyes wet with shame,
who stirred the fire in Him.

Not the woman at the well,
cupping water in her hands,
not the beggar,
nor the leper whose skin
peeled away like old parchment.

No, His anger burned
for those who stood tall,
robes clean, fingers pointed,
who weighed mercy
and found it too light.

He overturned their tables,
not with violence,
but with truth—
coins rolling into the cracks
like things unworthy of grasping.

And I wonder—
if He walked among us now,
where would His fury fall?
Not on the broken,
but on those who refuse to see
that love was always the law.



Dear friends,

This past season has been marked by both highs and lows in the mission here in Brazil. While we've made meaningful progress in presenting our proposal to develop dedicated church spaces within the prison system, we've also faced some setbacks that remind us to trust in the Lord's greater plan. One of the more difficult moments came when the director of the women's prison decided to cancel the course we had been preparing to run there. Unfortunately, the director was unable to see the value of the Prison Fellowship course, which centres on understanding the gospel and how this can prepare inmates for life after release. Instead, a sewing course has been introduced. While we lament this decision, we continue to pray for any barriers to be removed and trust that the seeds sown will bear fruit in God's time. It's also worth noting that this is the third director in as many years, and with such frequent changes, we remain hopeful that new opportunities may arise in the future. For now, this particular initiative is on hold.

In the men's prisons, however, the ministry continues to grow. During this term, we completed two full terms in different prison units, and in mid-April, a third cohort will finish the programme. That's nine full terms delivered so far. The course has now been expanded to 12 sessions, meaning that over 24 hours together we are able to explore the foundations of the Christian faith in depth, with ample room for questions and rich discussions. With each cycle, our understanding deepens and our portfolio of resources expands! The prison authorities are now keen to select participants themselves rather than us doing so. While this takes the decision out of our hands, it's opening doors for men who may never have encountered the gospel to hear it for the first time. It's in these conversations that we see how culture so often distorts and dilutes the identity of Christ. Many assume that salvation is a broad and all-encompassing path, when in reality, Jesus clearly taught that "the gate is narrow and the road hard that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:14).



The guards are also becoming more familiar with us, and while they still find it unusual that, as a foreigner, I (Andy) would choose to be here rather than living and working in the UK, small conversations with them are opening doors for deeper connections. Kati will co-lead the groups with me to strengthen delivery once her security clearance comes through to enter the men's prison. A breakthrough came

when our proposal to plant churches within the prisons was approved by Pastor Luís Magalhães, the regional lead for the Baptist prison ministry in southern Brazil. With this endorsement to proceed, we presented the plan to the director of the São Pedro de Alcântara penitentiary. We were accompanied by Pastor Antônio, whose nearly 40 years of experience in the prison system added valuable weight to our meeting. The leadership team received us warmly and acknowledged that the initiative aligns with the constitutional right of inmates to participate in church services – something that, in practice, never happens in the local prison system. Following this, we had a similar meeting at the Florianópolis penitentiary. In what can only be described as the Lord's timely provision, Pastor Luís was able to join us unexpectedly at the last minute, as he happened to be travelling through the state from his base in Curitiba. We had been stirred for this moment for a long time, knowing this was a pivotal moment in the mission. We were met by director Max Cléber Orth, who unexpectedly introduced himself as the regional superintendent overseeing all five prisons in the area. A practising Catholic with a personal interest in prisoner rehabilitation, he listened attentively and expressed support for the project. He approved the proposal on the spot for São Pedro de Alcântara, saying it was an ideal fit. Regarding Florianópolis, Max expressed support but explained that due to the prison's planned relocation, structural investments and new initiatives are currently restricted. This means a delay but not a closed door. The proposal is now being reviewed at higher levels of authority. While this was very encouraging, we are aware that it will require follow-up. A further meeting will be necessary to ensure that the next steps are taken, and until then, we'd be grateful if you can continue to walk with us in prayer for the breakthrough we want to see! We are deeply encouraged by where things stand. Each time we walk through the prison corridors and glance out at the courtyards where inmates gather for their two-hour break outside their cell, we see groups of 20+ men praising God, sharing the Word and pursuing Christ together. And yet, in the penitentiary, which has over 1,800 men, and is at 20 per cent over capacity, there is no one officially recognised to shepherd these men in their faith. Some, by exception, now have a Bible but most have no consistent pastoral care. It brings to mind how Jesus, seeing the crowds, was moved with compassion, for they were like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36). This vision strengthens our resolve to press forward.

Alongside the prison ministry, we continue to serve as leaders in Vineyard Church Florianópolis. Andy preaches regularly, while Kati is organising ministry teams and supporting leaders. As a church, we have completed some challenging series on The Way of the Disciple and Doctrines of the Gospel, both of which have deepened our understanding of following Christ. After a season marked by various transitions and the intentional work of restoring stability, we are now witnessing renewed growth within the church and we are full of faith and anticipation for all that God has prepared ahead. Thank you for your prayers and partnership in this mission. We look forward to sharing more updates soon.

Andy, Kati and Eva

BB
Open Night

Our Open Night was held at St Matthew's on Friday May 16th with special guests
the Revd John Bell, Mrs Rebecca Bell and our Hall Administrator Mrs Trish Playfor and an audience in the hall of parents and friends.
We had 38 members on parade taking part in displays of drill, Anchor Boy games, musical talents, Junior parachute and a Beep test Competition which won by Cpl Tyler Anderson.





John presented badges including three Junior Gold Awards (The highest a Junior may achieve) and Boys Brigade Water Bottles to each member.

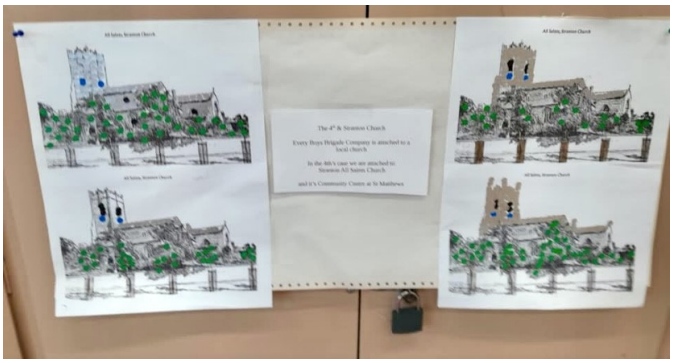
Five Boys were promoted from the Junior section to the Company Section and L/Cpls Billy Ratcliffe and Tyler Anderson were promoted to Corporals, and Corporal Lewis Downing was promoted to Sargeant.

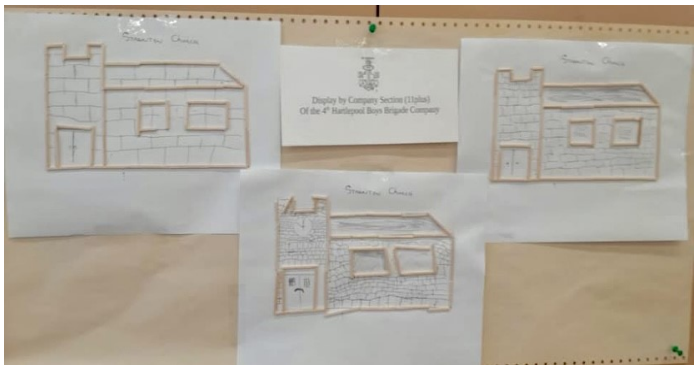
Our Junior Boy of the year was Charlie Brackstone and Company Champion was Sgt L Downing.





Art work displays





Artistic Appeal

Recently at Boys Brigade our Lads and Boys have been making drawings and collages of Stranton Church but there was one drawback – we had no really good drawn images of Stranton Church to help us.
So if you have an artistic bent, could you produce a good drawing of Stranton Church so Boys and Girls can make even better artistic/craft impressions in the future.

Future Events for the Summer
The Anchors will be having a sand castle competition, a visit to Stranton Church and a Superheroes Night.

Juniors will enjoy visits to Jump360, Seaton, the Blue Lagoon, Stranton Church, McDonalds, Nerf Wars and Crimdon Dene.

Company visits will include outings to the Blue Lagoon, Go Climb Castle Eden **Dene and the swimming pool.**

The Summer Fayre is on Saturday 28th June
At St Matthews 09.30 hrs - 12noon
BARGAINS GALORE guaranteed!

We are collecting Bric a Brac - please ring George Bainbridge on 07816 445829 if you have need it collected or drop it off at St Matthew's CC on a Monday or Friday Night

July 12th The Great St Matthew's Community Centre Tidy Up

On this Saturday we will be fighting the weeds and undergrowth around St Matthew's Community Centre from 09.30 - 12noon.
If you can spare half an hour or a little longer your help would be greatly appreciated.

Summer Camp from July 21st- 26th

This is being held at Birch Scout Centre near Scarborough and a full programme of activities has been put together - we have 17 Lads attending Camp this year.

All our activities can be seen on our Facebook page.
George Bainbridge
07816445829

CELEBRATE!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!
to

June

Peter Anderson
Paul Anderson
Riley Bruce
Emma Craig
Tim Craig
Mike Dodds
Bill Greenwood
Pam Harkness
Simon Jennett
Tim Jennett
Kelly Spoors
Ramona Thornhill



Happy 60th Birthday
Bill Greenwood



Wedding Anniversary

Ann & Andrew Cuthbert
Ray & Paul Clark

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.

Spring has sprung!

Bulbs have slowly found their way out of the darkness of their tombs.

Yellow blooms stand proud
crying out “I survived the winter!”

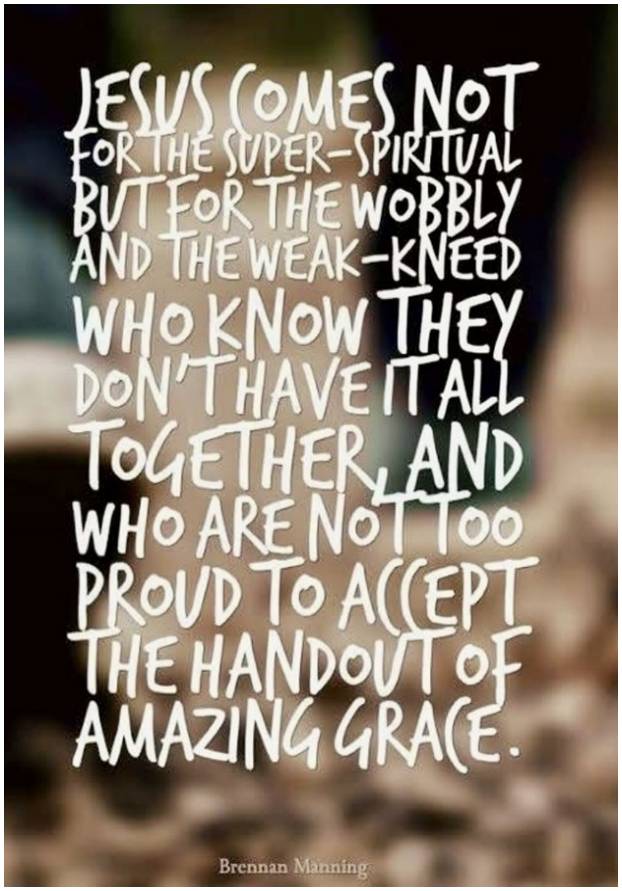
Baby buds peek out of tree branches
Waiting for their turn to shine!

The clouds hold back the rains letting the sun shine again.

Soon the darkness of winter will be a distant memory.
Our faces turn towards the warmth of the rays.

Rejoice this spring as you too have survived another winter!

Ang Hall





Gresford – The Miners' Hymn (The Pitmen's Requiem)Written by Robert Saint (1905-1950)

Commemorating the 256 miners (men and boys) who lost their lives in a tragic pit accident at **Gresford** Colliery near Wrexham in 1934. (Underground gas explosion).
Robert Saint was a coal miner at Hebburn Colliery in Co. Durham from 1920 until its closure in 1932. He was also a "gifted" musician playing in the Hebburn Colliery Prize Band. After a period of unemployment he signed up as a regular soldier in the 5th Battalion *Northumberland Fusiliers* and played in the Band as trombonist, but was discharged in 1939 as medically unfit.
He was so moved by the effects on that mining community and the loss of so many lives that he wrote **Gresford** in 1936 and he spent time making modifications until it was ready for a public performance by the Brancepeth Colliery Prize Band in 1938.
Robert Saint was also involved in a local dance band in his home area particularly around Hebburn , Jarrow and South Shields, and known as the *Kensington Dance Orchestra*, in which he generally played the Saxophone. He was also a proficient performer on the violin and clarinet and gave music lessons locally in Hebburn.
His father had also been a cornet player in the Hebburn Colliery Prize Band and the local Hebburn Salvation Army Band.
The tune featured regularly at Durham Miners Annual Galas and other occasions such as funerals of colliers killed at work, and in particular the 83 killed at Easington, Durham in 1951 in an underground explosion. There were no words originally but two attempts have been made to link words to the tune. The more successful has been that of a paraphrase of **Psalm 130** , by David Lee © 2011, the first verse of which is,
Out of the depths I cry to you O Lord, Make, Lord your ears attentive to my call,
Sorrow and fear overwhelm and engulf me, Lord in your mercy, hear my cry.
Underground explosions were a potential daily hazard in many collieries, including of course that of 9th April 1908, at Norton Hill with the loss of 10 lives.
Food for thought perhaps for local churches to include this hymn in their services on the nearest Sunday to the next anniversary of this tragic event, as a lasting memorial to those whose lives were lost in such a tragic event.

Notes by Jeff Parsons in conversation with J Cornelius Starbuck © 2024
Based on ***The Pitmen's Requiem*** by Peter Crookston 2010

Out of the depths from Psalm 30 The Miners Hymn

These are not the original words but a subsequent reworking, better to fit the tone of the circumstances. Words by David Lee.

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord
Make, Lord, your ears, attentive to my call,
Sorrow and fear overwhelm and engulf me,
Lord in your mercy, hear my cry.

Should you, O Lord, keep watch for every wrong,
Who then, O Lord, could raise their head in song?
Yet in your grace is forgiveness and freedom,
Help me revere and fear your name.

Wait for the Lord, wait patiently, my soul,
Wait for the Lord, though tower and temple fall,
More than the dawn watchers watch for the dawning,
Wait through the bleakest, darkest hours.

May we, your people, joined in one accord,
Out from the depths, renew our hope o Lord,
May we in you, find redemption and mercy,
Lord , hear our cry, our deepest song.

Film review: The King of Kings

***Stephen Brown* reviews a new animated film**



THE Gospels provide little information about Jesus in terms of biographical details. As St John (20.31) says, they were written so that you may believe that 'He is the Christ and have life in His name'. A new animated feature, *The King of Kings* (Cert. PG), strives to do much the same thing, though, additionally, we do get to see how it imagines he looks and sounds.

It comes from Angel Studios, which promotes "Godly movies the whole family can enjoy", such as *Cabrini*(Arts, 8 March 2024) and *Sound of Hope* (Arts, 11 October 2024). Its latest production is based on Charles Dickens's *The Life of Our Lord*, which he read, acting all the parts, to his children every Christmas. Only after all of them had died was it published as a book in 1934.

The film starts with Dickens (voiced by Kenneth Branagh) on stage, performing *A Christmas Carol.* His family watches from the wings until the rather precocious son Walter (Roman Griffin Davis) interrupts the presentation, asserting that the story of King Arthur's knights is far superior. Back home, the author's wife, Catherine (Uma Thurman), counsels a nettled Charles to share with Walter his deeply held Christian beliefs in language that the boy would understand. So, the master storyteller devises (and not without humour) a means of winning Walter's loyalty to someone who, like Arthur, is a great king.

From thereon, the film constitutes a blend of father, mother, and child talking about Jesus, which is then illustrated with scenes related in the Gospels. Echoing the style of the medieval Mystery plays, Charles and Walter gradually merge into the narrative themselves. Jesus's story becomes their story. From a manger bursting with the promise of new life to a tomb wherein he lies on our behalf, it is skilfully executed.

As in all biblical movies, with the possible exception of Pasolini's *The Gospel According to S*t *Matthew* (1964), we are treated to an amalgam of vignettes culled from the four Evangelists' testimonies, irrespective of their different theological positions. Attention is given to several of the miracles, but not a single parable is told. The significance of the resurrection is confined to being something stupendously divine, but without any indication of its significance for the ways in which the lives of Easter people are fashioned by the experience. And, while there is steadfast adherence to any dialogue lifted straight from translations of the Gospels, speech emanating from the Dickens family is peppered with cultural anachronisms. That, with a lack of uniformity of accents (American and British), somewhat undermines credibility.

One cannot but admire the technical skill of Mofac Animation, the South Korean company behind this project, under the supervision of celebrated animator Seong-ho Jan, making his directorial debut. Despite the relative simplicity of its stop-motion puppetry, however, the UK's *The Miracle Maker* provides a deeper sense of involvement. In that film, we were not just witnesses, but completing in our poor flesh the full tale of Christ's afflictions here on earth.

Written by Pope Francis when in the Hospital in the weeks before his death. ♡

“The walls of hospitals have heard more honest prayers than churches...
They have witnessed far more sincere kisses than those in airports...
It is in hospitals that you see a homophobe being saved by a gay doctor.
A privileged doctor saving the life of a beggar...
In intensive care, you see a Jew taking care of a racist...
A police officer and a prisoner in the same room receiving the same care...
A wealthy patient waiting for a liver transplant, ready to receive the organ from a poor donor...
It is in these moments, when the hospital touches the wounds of people, that different worlds intersect according to a divine design. And in this communion of destinies, we realize that alone, we are nothing.
The absolute truth of people, most of the time, only reveals itself in moments of pain or in the real threat of an irreversible loss.
A hospital is a place where human beings remove their masks and show themselves as they truly are, in their purest essence.
This life will pass quickly, so do not waste it fighting with people.
Do not criticize your body too much.
Do not complain excessively.
Do not lose sleep over bills.
Make sure to hug your loved ones.
Do not worry too much about keeping the house spotless.
Material goods must be earned by each person—do not dedicate yourself to accumulating an inheritance.
You are waiting for too much: Christmas, Friday, next year, when you have money, when love arrives, when everything is perfect...
Listen, perfection does not exist.
A human being cannot attain it because we are simply not made to be fulfilled here.
Here, we are given an opportunity to learn.
So, make the most of this trial of life—and do it now.
Respect yourself, respect others. Walk your own path, and let go of the path others have chosen for you.
Respect: do not comment, do not judge, do not interfere.
Love more, forgive more, embrace more, live more intensely!
And leave the rest in the hands of the Creator.”
Pope Francis



Dates for the Diary

Upcoming events

MAY			
Thurs 29th	**Ascension Day Service**	**St Luke's**	**7.00pm**
Sat 31st	**Plant Sale**	**St Luke's**	**10.00am**
JUNE			
Wed 4th	**Pub Theology**	**The Causeway**	**7.00pm**
Thurs 5th	**Cell Group The Vicarage,**	**5 Tunstall Ave.**	**7.00pm**
Sat 6th	**Coffee & Cake**	**St Matthew's CC**	**2.00-4.00pm**
Thurs 12th	**Deanery Synod**	**Stranton**	**7.00pm**
Sun 14th	**Messy Church**	**St Mathew's CC**	**4.00-5.30pm**
Wed 18th	**Pub Theology**	**The Causeway**	**7.00pm**
Thurs 19th	**Cell Group The Vicarage, 5 Tunstall Ave**		**7.00pm**
Sat 28th	**Boys Brigade Summer Fayre St Matthew's CC**		**9.00-12.00pm**
Sat 28th	**Revd Andrew McAllister's Priesting at Durham Cathedral**		**4.00pm**
Sun 29th	**Claire Mead's Ordination at Durham Cathedral (note Joint Group Service at St Columba's)**		**10.00am**
JULY			
5th	**Summer Fayre St Luke's**		**2.00pm**
12th	**St Matthew's CC Big Tidy Up**		

Central Hartlepool Group Mission Project

Monday Meditation	**Mon 7:00pm to 8:00pm St Columba's**
Stranton Toddlers Term Time Only	**Tues 9:00am to 11:00am St Matthew's**
Spiritual Oasis	**Wed 8:30am to 2:00pm St Columba's**
Friday Drop-In Cafe	**Fri 10:00am to 12:00pm St Aidan's**
Friday Meditation	**Fri 2:00pm to 3:00pm St Columba's**
The Fireplace Cinema Monthly	**1st Fri 3:30pm start St Luke's**

VE Day Celebrations at St Lukes's





We had a wonderful afternoon on 8th May when 28 people joined us to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe with an afternoon tea.

There was food, fun and fellowship to be had, showing hospitality and love to friend and stranger alike, with a 40's theme plus songs to sing wonderfully accompanied by Julia Russell.

Who's Who

Church Office	St Matthew's Community Centre Arncliffe Gardens TS26 9JF
Administrator	Trish Playfor **Tues- Fri, 9.00 to 11.00am 01429 894006 or** 07305 550009 E-Mail: **admin@stranton-church.org.uk** Web Site: **www.stranton-church.org.uk**
To contact clergy by E-mail	E-Mail: **clergy@stranton-church.org.uk**

Priest in Charge 34A Westbourne Road 07512 481115
Revd. John Bell
Email: revdjohnbell@stranton-church.org.uk

Reader
Mary Tones 40a Blakelock Road 07972 342890

St Aidan's & Columba's Church
Priest in Charge
Revd. Becky Reeve 5 Tunstall Avenue 01429 617358
Email: revbeckystaidanandcolumba@gmail.com

Safeguarding: Jacqui Rogers (Stranton Parish Safeguarding Officer)
safeguarding@stranton-church.org.uk 07749 163606

Churches Together in Hartlepool
Secretary Susan Atkinson,
St Mary's RC

Church Wardens	Angela Craig 57 Claremont Drive	234279
	Peter Anderson 22 Thetford Road	871266
PCC Secretary	Maureen Anderson 22 Thetford Road	871266
Treasurer	David Craig 57 Claremont Drive	234279
Asst. Treasurer	Maureen Anderson 22 Thetford Road	871266
Loyalty Treasurer	Ken Shepherd 251 Park Road	268007
Notice Sheet	The Office (Notices by the preceding Wednesday)	
Signpost Editorial	Jacqui Rogers 19 Trentbrooke Avenue	265527
Signpost Advertising	Maureen Anderson 22 Thetford Road	871266

St Matthew's Booking Trish Playfor Church Office 894006

Magazine articles to the parish office by 16th of every month.