Stranton and Burbank Community

SIGNPOST



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

July 2025

Our lives together



When I first came to faith in my late twenties I was lucky that the first church whose doors I darkened was a vibrant and faith filled place. It was a free church, which met in a URC building just behind Camden Market in London, so it was a buzzy and exciting place to be. In the afternoons we held a traditional liturgical service, which was a blend of Anglican, Iona, Roman Catholic and other bits and pieces, attended by people from many different walks of life and previous religious traditions. After the service we would all go out for a meal together in Camden, and then there was a praise and worship evening service, where we would throw the doors of the church open and pull people in from the street outside to see what was happening. In the week life was a whirl of cell groups, study groups, rehearsals for the play we were putting together, music rehearsals for the services, meetings and so on. We were a church which prayed together, ate together, socialised together, studied together and worshipped together. It was just what I needed as someone who had a lot to learn about Christianity and how to be a Christian and I made friends and felt part of things really quickly. Looking back, my old church also reminds me of the passage in Acts 2, which talks about the fellowship of the followers of Jesus learning, breaking bread, and praying together in the temple and in their homes each day.

In time I felt a draw to go deeper in the style of worship I experienced in the afternoon service, and found a lasting home in an Anglican church, but I have never forgotten the heady days of my time in my first church. It was a place where anyone who had faith was seen as someone with the potential to serve and lead. I am delighted that we are starting to grow the ‘wraparound’ life of St Aidan’s, with a new informal midweek eucharist and a daytime and an evening cell group, one with a scripture focus, which has just finished the book of Esther and will next be looking at the book of Hosea, the minor prophet, and one which is finding inspiration in the lives of the saints which speak to us as individuals. All of these are places where people are being welcomed to see themselves not just as those who receive from others, but as people who have the potential and the ability to lead others in the life of faith as well. As a bit of light relief the Central Group Mission Project also have the pub theology group on Wednesday evenings, which is helping to draw together people from all the churches in our group which is great to see. In addition to these, we have more opportunities to pray with others as well, with Patricia adding a weekly Wednesday in person prayer time for

the life of our churches and parishes to her long-standing weekly prayer zoom. For those who are looking for quiet prayer and relaxation with others the Central Group Mission Project have twice weekly meditation sessions which Patrick runs and are connecting to lots of people who are not part of a formal church (yet!). It is so lovely to start getting to know people better across the parishes as we meet during the week and share fellowship, and it is bringing back happy memories of my first church.

There are so many more things I would like to see us doing, like chances to socialise and have fun together as a community and maybe a walking group to get out and enjoy nature, but when I get back from my time walking the Camino in June I will be focusing next on how we can better develop our pastoral care in St Aidan's church, which has been suffering since our wonderful reader, Linda Dott, moved on. Further down the pipeline I have thoughts about setting up a group to nurture people new to the church, or wanting to go deeper in their faith, and also a Sunday evening service. For now though, it would be great to hear your thoughts about what you would like to see in the life of St Aidan's and St Columba's and the Central Group Mission Project and how you could be part of this. Thoughts on a postcard (or an email or a chat after the Sunday services) to:-

Revd Becky

Summer Children's Holiday Club 2025

We really need YOUR help…

We require a number of volunteers to help in supervising crafts and activities and assisting in the kitchen at our Holiday Activities Club during the summer holidays.

Helpers are needed from 9:00am to 3:00pm
on 29th, 30th, 31st July and 1st, 5th, 6th,7th, 8th August.

If you are able to help on any one (or more) of these dates please contact
Revd John, Hayley or the Parish Office as soon as possible.

From the Home Front

Hubby and I recently celebrated communion in a country church in North Yorkshire in order to visit our friend who is the priest in charge of four churches in this rural area. The congregation of about 30 was elderly with hubby and I amongst the 4 younger people (and we are both now retired!), there were no children or families.

However, the service was lovely with a relevant sermon and thoughtful intercessions. Afterwards we stayed for refreshments. A dedicated lady had brought the cups, milk and biscuits – the only facilities in the church being a tap and two kettles! So, everything had to be taken home to be washed! We chatted with some of the local people who were very appreciative of all their vicar did and felt very blessed to have her after a long vacancy. A nucleus of church members moved from church to church each week in order to access a service. One congregant spoke with us about the situation in Iran which had escalated overnight with B2 bombers attacking nuclear storage facilities. We talked of our fears of escalation and attacks within the Middle East and the possible impacts on the rest of the world. We also admitted we just didn't know what and how to pray for the unfolding events and the complex situation with such egotistical personalities involved.
Then this morning on Lectio 365 came this:

> … The Hebrew word, *shalom,* means peace, but also completeness, wholeness, safety, security, soundness, health, and prosperity. It is the restoration of all things.



Perhaps God doesn't need complicated detailed prayers at all?
Maybe one word **'Shalom'** is enough when prayed for sincerely in its complete meaning.

So, in these uncertain times I feel that I am going to 'stop sweating the small stuff' - it really doesn't matter if the day to day admin of the church is not 100% correct or there is a glitch within a service, or people don't agree on details. What does matter is that we all pray for the world and for all of the nations who live side by side around it – our God is the God of the impossible and He can sort the situation and the people – but we need to pray continuously. My prayer today and every day is **Shalom**…..
J.A.R.

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 5th July 2025

Saturday 6th September 2025

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

The Bell Tower Quiz

B Which Tower was built on the plain of Shinar?_**B**_____
E Which book incudes a passage about time **E**_____
L Which **L's** wife was turned into a pilar of salt?_____
L Which **L** was the father of Noah? _____

T Which **T** was one of Paul's companion?_____
O Which **O** was an Archbishop of Canterbury (Died in 985AD)
W What **W** did Jesus do and Peter tried W_____ on W_____
E The risen Jesus met Clopas and a friend on the road to **E**_____
R Which R was Paul's citizenship **R**_____

Hold on…

Hold on to what is good, even if it's a handful of earth.
Hold on to what you believe, even if it's a tree that stands by itself.
Hold on to what you must do, even if it is a long way from here.
Hold on to your life, even if it's easier to let go.
Hold on to my hand, even if I've gone away from you.
A Pueblo Indian Prayer

Worship 24/7 – 14th June

If you didn't pop in – you missed an amazing worship experience!
So many styles of worship music all with God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit at its centre. Words that spoke into hearts, opened up past wounds to be healed, and brought the Holy Spirit into the midst of the church, touching those who were praying and singing.

A huge thank you to the musicians, singers, technicians, shifters, welcomers and for the catering. What a wonderful worship event…











Gardening News - Summer

At the time of writing (mid June), I have just returned from a holiday in Crete (more of this later). The end of May/beginning of June is not a convenient time to be abandoning an English garden, when there is ground to prepare; bags of compost to be hauled from shop to car and into the garden; plants to buy; baskets and pots, and finally borders, to be planted up; and then, once all this is completed, watering, feeding and more watering to be done. So, what to do? I decided the best plan was to buy some plants, but not all of them, plant the baskets and some of the pots, then leave them all near the outside tap, with the hose pipe (not yet banned!), a watering can and some plant food and give instructions to the family with a view to keeping them all (ie the plants) alive. The plan seems to have worked! It was helped when a green-fingered friend, who every summer very kindly gives us a hanging basket (which is far better than I can achieve) together with some of his home-grown plants, offered to keep them until our return. That just leaves me to buy a few more plants, finish planting the pots, weed and plant the borders and then continue the watering, feeding and more watering.

We returned to some extra-long grass, infiltrated by a host of daisies, buttercups and dandelions (which I thought looked quite pretty). Fortunately, however, this is not my problem, as it is not my job to mow the lawn (though I was asked, somewhat accusingly I thought, if I had sown wildflower seeds in the grass). There is strict job demarcation in this garden – grass versus flowers. Just as well, since the grass cutter sometimes has difficulty differentiating between a flower and a weed and is a serious danger to plants when armed with a pair of secateurs.

We had a lovely holiday, but I am always glad to see my garden when I get back and find out what I have been missing. My David Austin, Olivia Rose was in full flower when we left, but is thankfully still flowering now, though needing serious deadheading, and other roses have started flowering in my absence. The Montana clematis that was in full bloom before we left has lost its flowers now, but another clematis that remains unidentified (as I don't recall planting it!) is now starting to flower. The hydrangeas are developing buds, a promise of colour to come in a few weeks' time. Most of the potted fuchsias have come to life, as have the replaced geraniums. The jasmine that had outgrown its allotted space and thus became victim to the afore-mentioned secateurs (shrubs are a bit of a grey area in the fight for territory) is now fighting back and even has some flowers on it. My favourite climbing rose (a highly scented peachy pink Albertine rambler) is, as usual, flowering more in our neighbour's garden than ours as it tries to seek out the sun.

Whilst away from my own garden, I have been able to enjoy other flowers, shrubs and trees in the very different climate of Crete. I have seen beautiful oleander shrubs in white, red, lemon and different shades of pink displaying masses of flowers in gardens and lining the roads. The jacaranda trees are in a class of their own, covered with vibrant purple flowers at this time of year. Then there are bougainvillea and mandevilla plants in red, pink and white, and, finally, plumbago with its beautiful powder blue flowers. There were also more familiar plants such as geraniums, fuchsias, poppies and petunias and even the odd rose bush, though they are not so keen on the hot, dry conditions.

The temperature was certainly rising as our holiday progressed and we were often wilting in the heat. In fact, a few days into our visit, whilst sitting in our apartment, we experienced an earthquake. We felt the building shake for a few seconds, but lived to tell the tale and it happens so often there that life went on as normal, with nobody seemingly batting an eyelid. The advice is apparently to take shelter under a

table (although we had serious doubts as to the amount of protection that would provide!) and always have a pair of shoes at the ready at the door in case you need to leg it. We wouldn't have had time to 'leg it', because my phone pinged with a government warning just as the shaking started. It was said to be a magnitude 5.3 on the Richter scale.

We have been visiting Crete for many years now as an 'old' friend (old in the sense that we have known each other since we started primary school together and before that met with our mothers at the local baby clinic) has lived there for over 20 years. When we visit, my friend and I usually attend the Sunday evening service at the local church. This is situated at the top of a hill (thankfully we were offered a lift), where there is a wonderful view of the sea, mountains and the town of Aghios Nikolaos, where we were staying. This church is attended by a mixture of Greeks, British ex-pats and people of other nationalities. The sermon and some of the hymns were in English. However, most of the service was, understandably, in Greek, but we could have followed the proceedings with the help of the service booklet we were given (which was in Greek, Latin and English) if only someone had told us which page to turn to! Regardless of that, we were given a warm welcome and enjoyed the service and a glass of wine afterwards (their very civilised alternative to tea and coffee). The language barrier was a bit frustrating, but complaining about the lack of English seems a bit like expecting restaurants abroad to sell fish and chips or roast beef and Yorkshire pudding.

My friend's balcony, as well as providing a wonderful view of sea and mountain, which turns pink as the sun sets, is a blaze of colour from many and varied potted plants. We once brought a couple of cuttings home from one of her plants (possibly illegal, so don't tell anyone), one of which is still alive and well in our conservatory.

Plants, of course, like ourselves, need a home where they can feel comfortable and, with the right care and conditions, become established and thrive. Some plants flourish in a damp, shady spot and some like it hot; some are shy and retiring while others are attention seekers; some are small and accommodating and will fit in with the rest and others are big and like lots of space to themselves; some need lots of encouragement and nurturing, while others are intent on spreading all over the place, especially where you don't want them, at the expense of other plants. Cheap and cheerful are my kind of plant – they're easy to please, keep on flowering and earn their spot in my garden – but there is also great satisfaction to be had from rescuing a plant in need of some TLC and watching it grow. Our favourite garden centre has a 'search and rescue' plant section for this very purpose.

I'm sure there is a moral to be had here. Maybe it is that plants are a bit like us – sharing many characteristics but all unique, with different strengths, weaknesses and needs and all requiring the right conditions in the right place to grow and reach our true potential in the mixed bed that is our world. Of course, I cannot claim this as an original thought, because Jesus himself exhorted us to look to "the lilies of the field" as a role model and example of God's provision.

On this occasion, rather than presenting you with an interesting(?) fact, I leave you with this thought: one of the great things about many plants is their fragrance, so enjoy the summer and, whatever you do -

Pam Stockton



Ward Jackson CE Primary
Update London Residential

And they're off! We waved off our Y5/6 pupils this morning as they boarded the train to London for their 2 night residential. They're off museum hopping, sight seeing and to the theatre to see Wicked! The best thing about it? They haven't had to spend a penny towards it themselves. Thanks to our approach to fundraising from private companies and local community support, all our trips, visits and events are totally free for all our families.





The children are having an amazing time! We have been to platform 9 and three quarters, done the London underground and conquered our fears with really high escalators. We have used our map reading skills to read an unfamiliar map - the London underground map. We have also used signs and a navigation app. Miss Petch is very proud to see us using skills we have learnt at school while we are out and about. We have met a friend who commented on the children's 'lovely' behaviour as they played cards, coloured in and chatted on the train. We will keep you updated more exciting updates! #wardjacksonway

Ward Jackson at Westminster - Wow! We had an amazing day visiting the Natural History Museum then Westminster Abbey. We had a guided tour around the Abbey and learnt about it's rich history and how the British Values are represented. We all had a really spiritual experience when lighting a candle and we even had the opportunity to sit in the choir seats and sing our favourite school song! #wardjacksonway



















Our Ward Jackson children had an amazing time in London yesterday. We learned to navigate the London tube system using our map reading skills. We took turns to use google maps and the TFL London underground App as well as the signs in the stations to find out how to get where we need to be. The adults have taken a step back and let the children take responsibility, solve problems and work as a team. They have really done us proud!! Because of their excellent navigation skills we got to see Buckingham Palace, The Ritz , and a formula 1 car. Miss Petch is confident that the children will be able to get to and from secondary school and face any problems that come their way. We then went to see Wicked and were amazed to see the band below the stage as well as the outstanding performers and stage set. On the way home we were lucky enough to see three foxes! What a day to remember!! #wardjacksonway









Today we visited the Tate modern art gallery and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. We had torrential rain so the children enjoyed walking through Borough Market. What an experience! We listened to a great classical musician playing the violin to a crowd and soaked in the atmosphere. What a fabulous end to our holiday! We are on the train and will see you all soon!
#wardjacksonway



Ralph Ward Jackson Day- 'We are proud of our area!' Norlina children tidying up our school car park and surroundings. What a difference you have made today, Well done!



What a day we have had at Ward Jackson! As part of #NSSW2025 the whole school enjoyed a visit to Summerhill Country Park and Visitor Centre where we developed our map reading and teamwork skills through orienteering. The determination and problem solving skills demonstrated were exemplary.
#wardjacksonway 😀☀️🌳





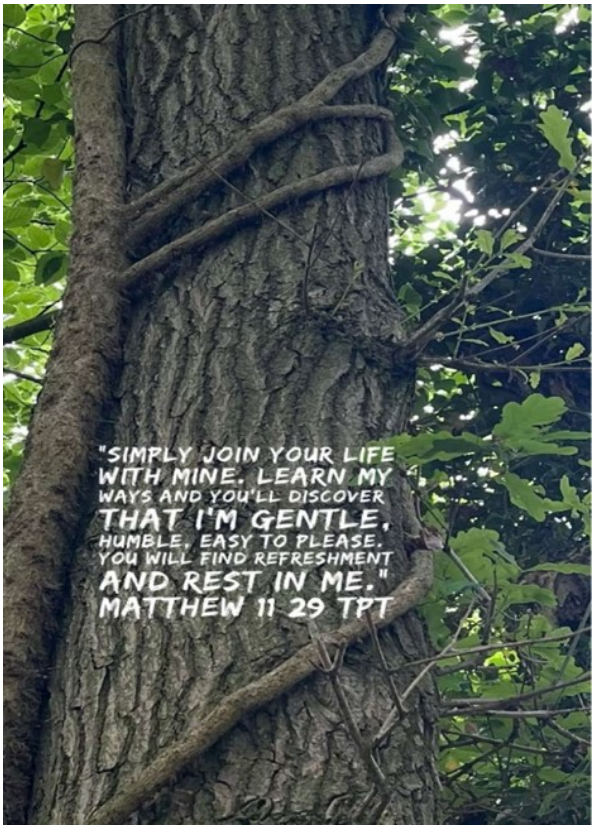
It's been another great #NSSW2025 at Ward Jackson! This week we have participated in balance bikes, swimming, forest school, rugby, dance, karate and orienteering. A huge thank you to all our amazing coaches who have provided some unforgettable experiences this week. #wardjacksonway 😀🎖️☀️

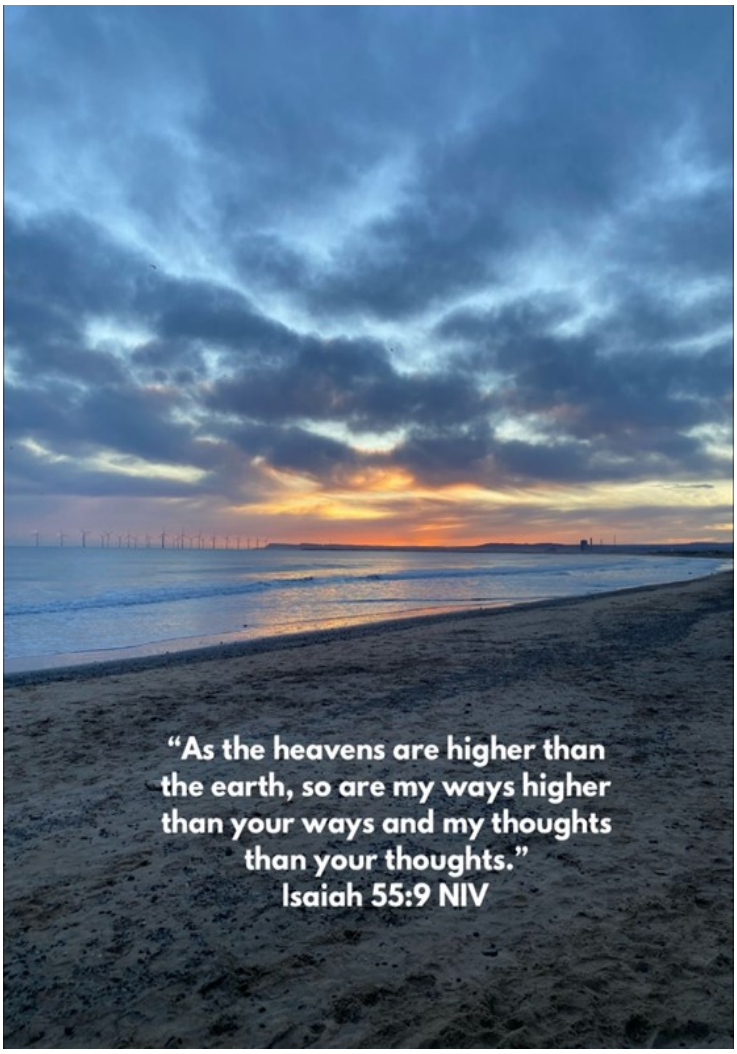














The Bell Tower Quiz Answers

B	Which Tower was built on the plain of Shinar?	**Babel**
E	Which book incudes a passage about time	**Ecclesiastes**
L	Which L's wife was turned into a pilar of salt?	**Lot's**
L	Which L was the father of Noah?	**Lamech**
T	Which T was one of Paul's companion?	**Timothy**
O	Which O was an Archbishop of Canterbury (Died in 985AD)	**Oda**
W	What W did Jesus do and Peter tried	**Walking on Water**
E	The risen Jesus met Clopas and a friend on the road to	**Emmaus**
R	Which R was Paul's citizenship	**Roman**

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

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Please contact us at:

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Hartlepool. TS24 9DA
Tel: 01429 855555

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Accountancy, Taxation and Payroll

49 Stockton Road
Hartlepool
TS25 1TX

Telephone: 01429 280444
Email: office.admin@strantonbusiness.co.uk
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energy.education@btconnect.com

A letter from God

Dear Child

Remember when you were walking through the woods, hearing the beautiful bird song, noticing the carpets of aromatic wild garlic on either side of your path?

Do you remember suddenly stopping when you saw the delicate yellow flower?

Or when you gasped in awe at how tall the green evergreen trees were?
On that long walk, you kept stopping and thanking me for my creation.
When you saw flycatchers nesting, you stopped and you smiled.
I watched you as you delighted in walking by rushing rivers.
My heart is full when you acknowledge me and my wonderful creation.
That my child is worship.

I have created everything, from the tiniest flower to the tallest tree.
What I would love for you to do now is acknowledge all my creation.
I created the one you love.
I created the people that are so special to you.
I created the person that gets under your skin. I created the person that rubbed you up the wrong way.
What I would love for you to do is to see me in everyone you meet.
To thank me for creating them.
To look in wonder at each person with their different characteristics and personalities, just as you do when you walk through a wood and see all the different flowers I created.
Remember, I created everyone.
Everyone is my beloved child.

Love from your Father.

"For the Holy Spirit makes God's fatherhood real to us as he whispers into our innermost being, "You are God's beloved child!""
Romans 8:16 TPT

Ang Hall

Boys' Brigade

Recently all the Boys Brigade leaders reviewed our aims – these are our conclusions:

Our Objective
Is the advancement of Christ's Kingdom amongst Boys and the promotion of habits of Obedience, Reverence, Discipline, Self Respect and all that tends towards a true Christian Manhood.

4th Hartlepool Boys Brigade Company is attached to Stranton All Saints Church and our Headquarters are at St Matthew's Community Centre.

Mission
Our Mission is to encourage all our members to build lifelong friendships and a deep faith in Jesus Christ (What a Friend we have in Jesus) through Devotions (Approximately 10 minute slot each night in which a different leader covers a bible passage or story, exploring its relevance at each different age level).

Our unique strength within Stranton Church is that we can reach out to our members and families who have little or no connection with Stranton Church itself and our leaders give a strong positive Christian example to our members.

Realisation
How we realise this mission plan is partly by encouraging our Boys and Lads to identify with both Stranton as our church and St Matthew's Community Centre as our HQ.

This can mean involving Lads in Tidy Up projects, visits to Stranton Church, Special Services during the Church year and helping at events such as Easter Eggheads.

Also, we are looking forward to building stronger bonds in the church and community as time progresses.

An Artistic Impression

Are you a budding artist and up for a challenge?
At the moment the drawings of Stranton Church - which children can colour/make pastiches are not that great - Could you draw one so that future generations of youngsters can be inspired by more fantastic works of art

Summer Fayre

Our Fayre is on **Saturday June 28th** - BARGAINS GALORE GUARANTEED
Admission £1.00 Children go free

If you want to see what activities we have been up to visit us on Facebook
George Bainbridge 07816445829

Juniors and Lads had a great time at Lofty's Crazy Golf







Company had a great evening at Go Climb last week



Company Lads enjoying our visit to Wynyard Park





Our Anchors Boys showing their sand castle building skills











The Annual Juniors Sand Castle Competition!

Once again a high standard of work, the judges scored it a draw and the winners got an ice cream!





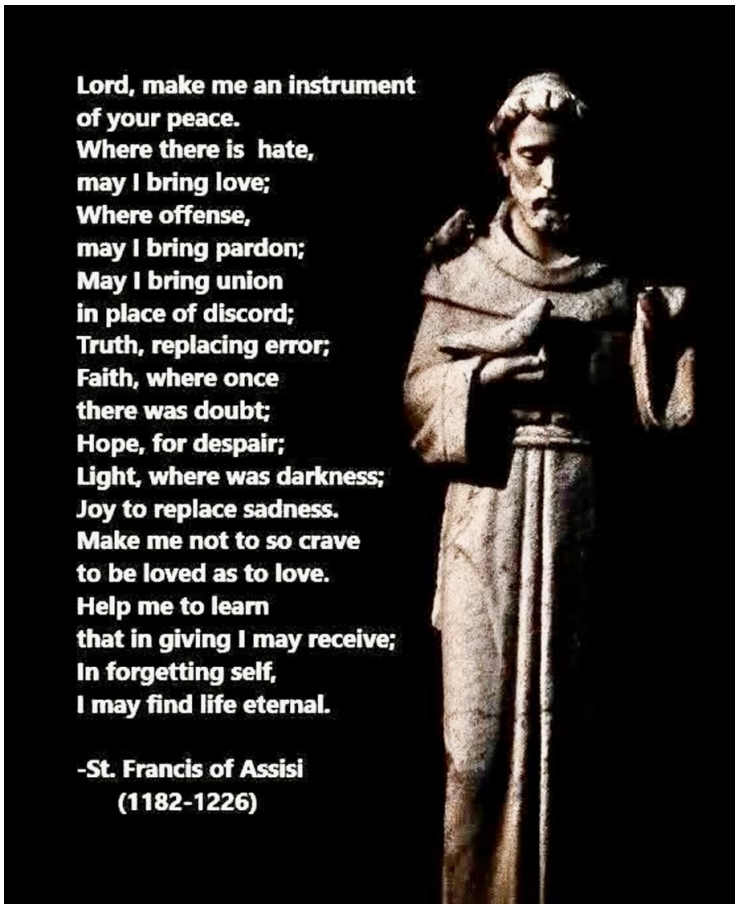


Our Anchor boys were visited by some Superheroes last night



Central Hartlepool Group Mission Project

Monday Meditation	(Restarts 6th July)	Monday7:00pm to 8:00pm St Columba's
Stranton Toddlers	Term Time Only	Tuesday 9:00am to 11:00am St Matthew's
Spiritual Oasis	Wednesday 12.00pm to 2:00pm	St Columba's
Friday Drop-In Cafe	Friday 10:00am to 12:00pm	St Aidan's
Friday Meditation	Friday 2:00pm to 3:00pm	St Columba's





CELEBRATE!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!
to

July

Maureen Anderson
Faith Barton
Ronnie Barton
Josh Bruce
Jean Connell
Daniel Grosvenor
Natalie Proffitt
Mary Robinson
Max Spoors
Jenny Tones
Diana Wanduragala
Geoffrey Webster

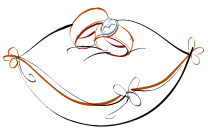


Wedding Anniversary

Faith & Adam Barton
Malinee & Aga
Andrew & Elspeth Craig
Bill & Diane Greenwood
Ken & Sylvia Shepherd

Golden Wedding Anniversary

Pam & Colin Stockton



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

Sat 5th **Cuppa, Cake & Company St Matthew's CC 2.00-4.00pm**

Sat 5th **St Luke's Summer Fayre 2.00-4.00pm**
Includes welcome of Claire Mead our new curate.

Sun 6th **Bring and share lunch to welcome Claire Mead**
All congregations welcome after 11.00 am service.

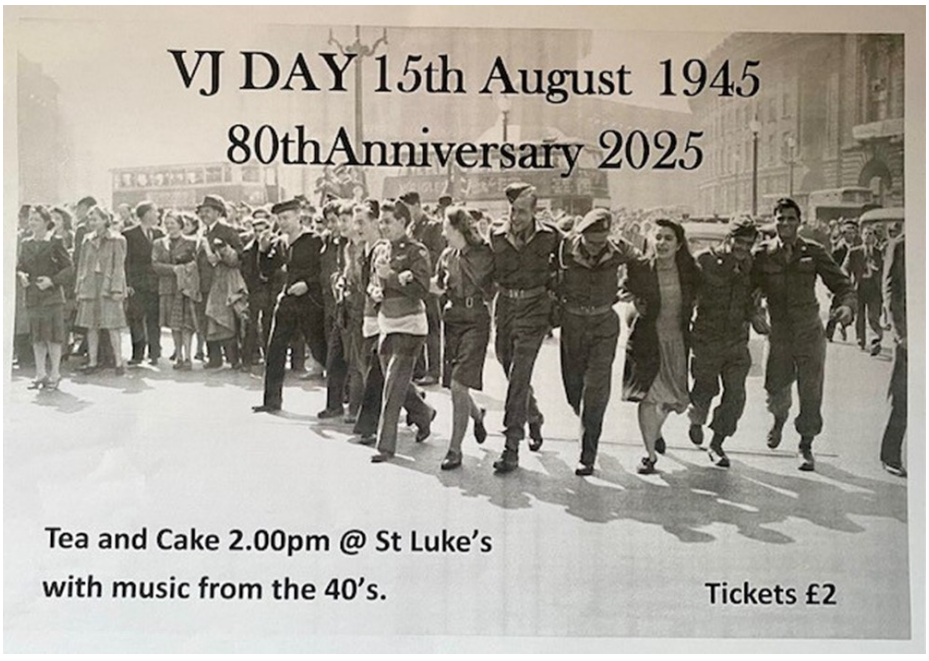
Sun 6th **Confirmation Service St Aidan's 6.00pm**

Wed 9th **Pub Theology The Causeway pub 7.00-9.00pm**

Sat 12th **PCC Tonight session St Luke's Rooms 9.30-12.30pm**
St Matthews CC Big Tidy Up 9.30-12.00pm

Sun 13th **Messy Church St Matthews CC 4.00-5.30pm**
All families welcome.

August Holiday Club St Matthew's CC 9.30-2.30pm
Tues 29th, Wed 30th, Thurs31st July and Fri 1st, Tues 5th, Wed 6th,Thurs 7th, Fri 8th



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 Revd. John Bell	34A Westbourne Road	07512 481115
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 671358
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	07899 897444
	Peter Anderson 22 Thetford Road	871266
PCC Secretary	Maureen Anderson 22 Thetford Road	871266
Treasurer	David Craig 57 Claremont Drive Contact Stanton Office	894006
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.