Stranton and Burbank Community

SIGNPOST



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

February 2026

Salvation is a gift… (The musings of a priest)

I write this having just spent a little bit of time reflecting on UCB's Word for Today (for the 19th January), and Ephesians 2:8 which says "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God". Salvation is a gift, freely given to us by the grace of God, for anyone who chooses to accept it, anyone who chooses to put their faith, their hope, their trust in God.

For many people, this poses a problem, for they can't see, hear, feel, or touch God, in the same way we might another person. For others, they struggle to understand why God would simply give us eternal life without us first having to prove ourselves worthy of it, or without having the money to pay for our spot. But here's the thing, if we had to earn our place in heaven, then how many of us would fail to make the grade? How many of us might instantly lose our place by gloating over how much better we were than others?

And what about those that couldn't earn their way into heaven? What about those that could never hope to buy their place?

The good news is that space in heaven isn't being auctioned to the highest bidder, to the person who has done the most. We each have our own room in our Father's house (see John 14), a space just for us. It's not something that God will offer to someone else if we don't take it, because they have their own place.

The good news is that we don't have to earn our salvation because "it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph 2:8b-9)

Salvation is a gift that God freely gives to each and every one of us because God doesn't want to be in a relationship with just some of us… He wants to be in relationship with every single one of us.

By offering this hope to others, we don't give away our own place, we simply invite others to join us, to place their faith, their hope, their trust, in God. And it's their choice, just as it's ours. God wants all of us to make the choice to accept this gift of salvation, but He can't make us take it. To do so would remove our choice, it would remove the relationship God wants so much to have with us.

"…the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

I encourage you all to take this gift, to welcome it (and Him) into your lives, and to think about who you might be able to share this amazing, freely given gift with, today, tomorrow, and the next day, praying for God to place people in your path to share the gift of salvation with, as we venture in to all that 2026 has for us.

Grace and peace, Revd John

From the Home Front

Well as I write a significant birthday is fast approaching for me. Getting older has never been an issue for me – in my head I am still 22 years old, even if my joints say differently! I have tried to embrace the many positives of every significant birthday – 18,21,30,40,50,60….
I also just enjoy it being 'my day' – probably because being number 5 of 6 children, I was rarely the 'centre of attention'. I only remember having one birthday party as a child. I had been to all my friends' birthday parties and so I just invited them all to my house on my birthday – then told my Mum! She wasn't pleased! I don't need presents, but I do enjoy the 'attention of my day', it makes me feel a little bit special.

We all need that personal touch of 'extra love' at times to give us a warm glow, cheer us up, make us feel better about ourselves and what we do, to add joy to a day. That feeling can come in the simplest of things – a thank you, unexpected smile, a small compliment, a hug or a bunch of flowers, a text or phone call or an answered prayer.

It amazes me how often God provides these reassuring touches just when we need them most. He knows us so well, He loves us so much and He cares about us so deeply. We need to tune into these special moments and just accept His part in every aspect of our lives.

The other day I suddenly needed an up to date passport style photograph for my new driving licence. I knew we had some from the summer when we renewed our passports. But I could not find them. We emptied drawers, files, 'safe place' nooks and boxes – no sign of them! Hubby suggested going to have another set taken. I just felt I had to trust that God would answer my prayer and lead me to them. Over the next couple of days I sorted out and cleared out most of the places I had looked. So much accumulated and not needed paperwork ended up shredded or in the bin! I felt pleased that I had achieved so much, even if I hadn't found the photos. So as I tidied the last bits of paperwork back into the first box where I had looked, I noticed the new passport leaflets I had put into the box as I started my search actually said 'new passport photographs' on the cover – there they were!

I almost felt God chuckling. He had answered my prayer as I started my search, but I was rushing frantically and didn't look carefully enough for the answer. I felt God's touch and also felt Him say – 'and you've finally sorted out all that rubbish you were putting off doing!' Still makes me smile and feel special that He cared about the mundane parts of my life.
So bring on the next year – every day is 'my day' with God as my Father….
J.A.R.



The countdown is on to 'Stranton Weddings Through The Years'!

We shared back in November about our wedding exhibition 'Stranton Weddings Through The Years', which will be taking place on Valentine's Day (14th February) from 10.00am-4.00pm. The church will be displaying photos and wedding dresses related to weddings that have taken place in the church. Everyone is very welcome to come along to this special event! (Entry is free and there will be refreshments available.) We hope for some singing and maybe bellringing too…

The church offers their thanks to the local press for supporting this event which is part of their 900th Anniversary Celebrations. Since releasing information about the event, we've been really pleased to hear from local residents with connections to the church. Those who've been married in the church and their friends and relatives. People have welcomed the opportunity to reconnect with the church and reminisce about their special days.

Dorry and Stan



Revd Claire was able to meet with a couple in their 90s who wanted to share their happy memories of being married in Stranton Church. Revd Claire said ‘It was a delight to meet with Dorry and Stan who still live in the town! They shared all about their wedding in the church in 1950 and loved looking through their photos with me. They thoroughly enjoyed reminiscing about Revd Hancock who officiated at the wedding; their friends and family who were a part of the service and the reception they had at the Boiler Makers Club opposite the Town Hall. It was great to discover how much Stranton Church meant to their life together!’.

Chloe and Jordan



Jordan and Chloe, members of the church community today, have also been searching out their photos for the event. Jordan, Worship Leader at the 11:00am service, and his wife Chloe met as young people at the Youth Fellowship. Jordan explains: “Chloe and I got married at All Saints Stranton in April 2017 with all our friends and family. It was the best place for us to get married because we'd actually met at Youth Fellowship in 2012. Almost everyone in our wedding party had been part of YF at some point, too. At the time, we were actually leaders at YF, and we've continued attending Stranton since and now have two children who are part of the current youth set up”.

It's not too late to get in touch with the team to share your memories. If you get in touch by 1st February, we’ll do our best to include your wedding story in ‘Stranton Weddings Through The Years’: admin@stranton-church.org.uk, 01429 894006. We’d love to be able to show more photos and wedding dresses as part of our displays.

Do come along to All Saints Stranton, Church Row, TS24 7QT
and join us on Saturday 14th February between 10.00am-4.00pm
for ‘Stranton Weddings Through The Years’!
(Accessible parking available in Camerons Brewery)

For more information about services and activities taking place each month to celebrate the Stranton Church 900th Anniversary, check out the church Facebook page and look in the local press.

Everyone is very welcome to join in the celebrations!

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My Memories of Stranton Church

I first arrived at Stranton Church when my mother started taking me and my sister there as children. We didn't live in the parish, but Stranton reminded her of the family church in her home town of Stoke-on-Trent. I remember travelling on the bus in the dark to attend Sunday evening services in a church full of light and people, with a large choir of male singers on one side of the choir stalls and female singers on the other.

When I started secondary school, my mother insisted that I had to be confirmed and I attended confirmation classes (along with a friend, whom I managed to persuade to come with me) run by Margaret Lumley, who was, incidentally, a teacher at my junior school. My friend and I were both allocated lady sponsors from the congregation, who were very kind and invited us both to tea. We both also joined the youth group, which met at St Matthew's Hall (as it was then) and was run by Ken Wright. I don't remember much of what we did, but we were all expected to attend church and sat at the back in our very cool jeans, attracting some disapproving looks from certain older ladies in the congregation. Inclusivity wasn't such a big thing then!

What I do remember from those days is my first experience of camping, in a field near Reeth and then in another field near Thirsk, and helping to organise a 'dance' at St Matthew's, at which we had a local live band. As organisers of this event, we had the privilege of being accepted for a short while into the company of these local celebrities. My only other brush with celebrity (which may seem to have nothing to do with the subject of this article, but does involve the then Head of the Anglican Church, so I think merits a mention) came in 1977 when I opened a door for the Queen (petite and beautiful, with flawless, peachy skin) and the Duke of Edinburgh (tall, tanned and handsome) at the opening of the Civic Centre, where I was then working.

During my university years, I attended Stranton sporadically when I was home and then, after finishing my course, I returned to Hartlepool and got married there (as did my sister). Leon Heatley was vicar up until this point, but left a few months before our wedding, so it was Maurice Jennett who did the deed. Maurice was very keen on my saying that I would 'obey'. In the year that the Equal Rights Act was passed, I was not so keen. However, if I didn't say 'obey', apparently the bridegroom (Colin) would not be saying that he would 'cherish' me and I quite fancied being cherished, so I backed down and agreed to say it (through gritted teeth).

When our first daughter (Catherine) was born, followed 3 years later by the second one (Anna), they were both christened at Stranton. At this time, christenings were carried out during the morning service, several babies being 'done' at the same time. When Anna was a toddler, I got involved with SMACC (Stranton Mothers' and Children's Club – a name that probably wouldn't be allowed now), which was just being set up. This was the first church group I attended and proved to be instrumental in getting to know people from the church and developing my faith. After this, I started taking my daughters and nephews to Stranton Sunday School, which was held at St Matthew's, dropping

them off on my way to church and then leaving the service early to pick them up.

House groups were introduced and I joined one, which morphed into several further house groups, mostly led by Jean Waller, and finally developed into a prayer group with Angela Craig, Jacqui Rogers and myself led by Jean. This all constituted several steps along the way on my faith journey, with some wonderful answers to prayer.

I have known, become fond of, then said a sad goodbye to several vicars/ priests in charge and many more curates (and others), both male and female. After Maurice, came Stephen Taylor, then Mike Gilbertson, followed by Norman Shave and now John. During Stephen's reign we also had 'The Lads' (4 lovely young men whose names I can't remember, except for Chad, who later became a vicar himself, as did the others. They stayed for a year (I think) and helped out mostly with youth work. With Stephen, they got involved in forming a lunch-time group at the College of FE, which I was also involved in as I worked there, and this led to the first of many College carol services, which have sadly lapsed now.

During Mike's term of office, service times changed and there was an extra Sunday morning service, which made three! Looking back now, I don't know how they managed it, but at least Mike only had one church to look after.
When Norman joined us, he brought with him a curate, Sarah, from his former church and tasked her with setting up a pastoral team, which I was keen to join. This is still very much alive and well today, with a committed band of members. Under John's leadership, and now with Claire's help, we have also been looking at ways of providing bereavement support.

My memories of Stranton are largely personal ones, marking important stages in my life and then in my children's and grandchildren's lives (daughters' christenings; one daughter's wedding; a granddaughter's confirmation). There are sad memories too, of parents' and parents-in-laws' funerals, but I am glad they took place at Stranton, which is to me our family church and my spiritual home, although I have never lived in the parish. There have, of course, been many funerals of people in the congregation who had become friends. It was here also that one Sunday morning I learned of the tragic death of Princess Diana, announced during the prayers, which was hard to comprehend. I also sat here one Sunday shocked by the killing of John Lennon (and also shocked that it wasn't mentioned in the prayers).

More generally, I can remember full-cast nativity services; quiet and magical Christmas Eve communion services; joyous Easter Sunday services (we once had donkey rides for the children at the back of the church); dramas (take a bow, Kevin Tones and Andrew Rogers – I seem to remember you once played, very realistically I have to say, the part of two rather noisy sheep); Christmas fayres, garden parties in the vicarage garden; Sunday mornings spent in Sunday Club; watching streamed services, introduced during COVID, which were a massive help when we could not meet in church; attending PCC meetings and various courses and training days. As well as priests, there have

been many churchwardens, whose contribution (and often their partners) to church life, I have learned over the fulness of time, is immense and incalculable and they should take a bow too.

There have been several changes to the church building in the time I have been attending and the church giving envelope scheme started as a means of raising money for repairs to the outside of the building. I remember when the Fulthorpe Chapel was sectioned off as a separate room and the gallery up the stairs to the base of the bell tower was created. There was also a mysterious theft, when silverware from the altar was stolen, was missing for several months and then miraculously returned and left outside Holy Trinity church in Seaton. My favourite feature of the church is the beautiful stained-glass window above the altar, which I love to look at.
I could go on – it's been a long time(!), but have to end somewhere. All of the above is, of course, subject to the vagaries of memory!

Pam Stockton

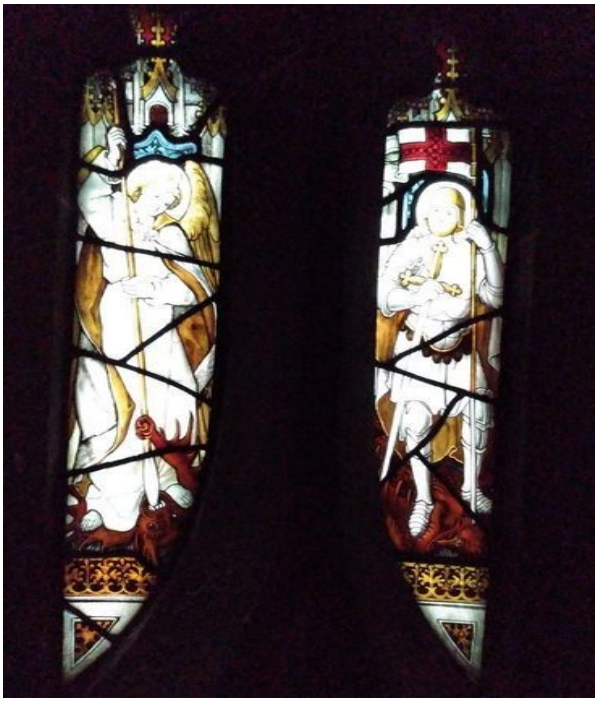
Lady Chapel Quiz

L What L connects Coin, Sheep and Son?
A Which saint is connected to Hippo?
D Which D was a Judge's barber?
Y Josiah was the y _____ King of Judah?

C Which C is the patron saint of shoemakers?
H H_____ of the H_____ Abide with me?
A Where believers were first called Christians?
P Which P was a son of Eli?
E What E does Jesus offer in John 3 v16
L Joel, Amos & Jonah are all part of the L_____ prophets?



Stranton 900th Anniversary - history



This an image of St Margaret of Antioch (left) and St. George (right) both of whom are associated with dragons and both were adopted by the Crusaders whilst in the Holy Land. These images are part of the small panes on the Cameron Window which is roughly where the Lady Chapel used to be in the 14th to 16th Centuries (where the Flags are now).

Above the entrance of Stranton Church today you can see a statue which was broken during the time of the English Civil War (The Roundheads were not into statues), which could either be St George or St Margaret.

The position of the statue at that time was in the Lady Chapel an indication that it is probably a statue of St Margaret of Antioch. St Margaret of Antioch is the patron saint of midwifery, expectant mothers, women in childbirth and nurses.
St George or St Margaret – which do you think?
Many thanks to David House for all the images of St George and St Margaret.

Picture of St Margaret of Antioch superimposed on the broken statue above the entrance door.



George Bainbridge

Discover Hope!

Just the title of the course makes me smile – I mean who doesn't want to discover hope! It feels like we live in a world where we like to talk about the doom and gloom – climate change, natural disasters and everything going wrong. I think we all sometimes forget how much hope there is in the world if we look close enough.

The Discover Hope course offers a way to find out more about the hope Christians have in Jesus Christ. I attended the first session and didn't fully know what to expect but I can't recommend it enough. Our small group had time to listen, reflect, question and discuss a piece of scripture while thinking about what stood out to us. It was a fantastic opportunity to think about the foundations of my faith as throughout the course we will be looking at different questions that you are asked at Baptism. I really enjoyed the session and through listening to others it really helped me to begin to think about my faith in a different way.

Whether you have been a Christian for years, a few weeks or just want to explore whether you believe in Jesus Christ then this is the course for you. It is a really good opportunity to listen to others and think more deeply about different aspects of the Christian faith.

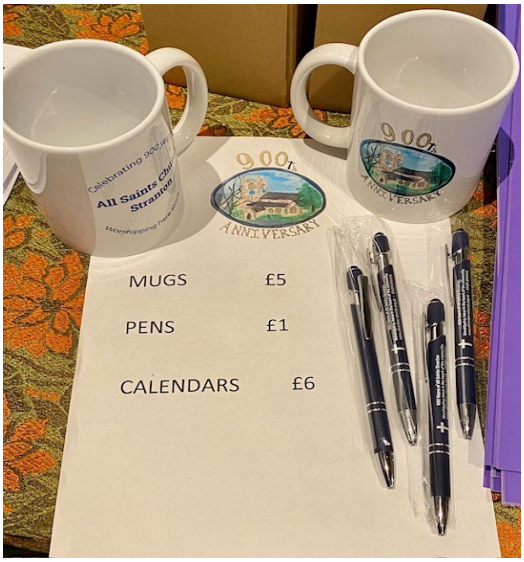
The sessions run from Thursday 15th January until Thursday 19th February at Stranton Church. They run from 7pm till 9pm. Please talk to John or Claire for more information if you are interested.

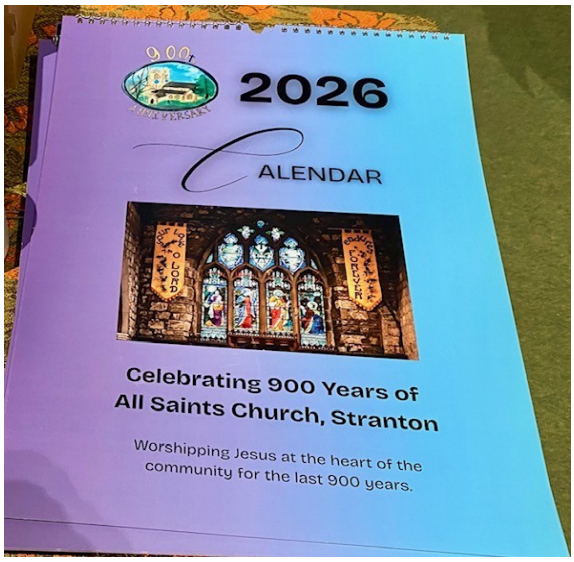
I can't wait to attend the next session!

Kate



Stranton 900th Anniversary Celebrations Souvenirs





If you would like to purchase a mug, pen or 2026 calendar please contact Trish in the Church Office, the Church Wardens or Revd John and Revd Claire. See contact list at the back of Signpost.

All Saints Stranton Church
Craft Fair

At St Matthew's Community Centre
March 14th
10.00am - 3.00pm

Refreshments available
Raffle & Tombola Stalls .

All Welcome
More information to follow.

Family Quiz Night Saturday 10TH January

An evening of fun and frivolity took place in the Fulthorpe Chapel, when nearly forty people from Stranton, St Luke's, Holy Trinity Seaton and Bellringers divided into 6 teams, and took part in the Family Quiz, as one of our ongoing 900th Anniversary celebrations. The team names were varied, including The Super 6½, The Clangers (The bellringers of course) and Mish Mash. The questions included rounds of Famous First Lines, People and Places, Name the Characters' Pictures and A Night at the Movies; this was a challenging round of film titles reworded as synonyms and antonyms (don't blame me, Jacqui wrote this round).

Half way through, we all enjoyed refreshments of hot dogs, nibbles, some delicious cake and biscuits, plus juice, tea and coffee.

Eventually the result was rather close. In third place with 48½ points were The Barbarians, in second place with 57 points was Fish Bowl on Fire and the winners with 58 points were The Regulars, these teams all received a prize - well done to all!

Thanks must go to Jacqui for writing some of the rounds, Maureen for organising the refreshments and to all who stayed behind at the end to help clear up. We also raised £76 towards Anniversary events.
Should we do it all again a bit later in the year????
Andrew Rogers.











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.

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Central Hartlepool Group Mission Project Update

After writing a report to the Diocese in August 2025 regarding our progress with the Mission Project, (the purpose of the project was to see growth in numbers and discipleship) the Diocese saw the potential of the ongoing work within the Rift House Estate and with project funding running until November 2026, they asked us to focus our energies into this.

This is against a backdrop of church numbers generally declining and other similar projects, although doing a lot of good, were not resulting in sustained increases in church attendances or the new worshipping communities that they had hoped for.

It was after a lot of prayer and hard work, including Hayley and I walking around the Rift House estate, conducting a door to door survey and getting noticed in a positive way by those we have encountered, we started to see the green shoots of progress at St Columba's Church, with some of the locals beginning to drop in and pray with us.

Normally you expect 5 years to get a church plant to mature, we have only a year! Please pray for us and you are invited to get involved as this is part of our group of churches.

Now you may be concerned about how this change in focus has affected the project work across the whole group of churches. The only two things that have been affected are:

- Hayley's school lunch time clubs (which have not led to church attendance).
- Our engagement in the holiday HAF clubs supporting children from poorer families. The HAF clubs provided us with equipment - children's tables, chairs bookcases etc. However, there are enough groups now running these so we weren't actually needed. Again, there was no cross over into our churches, so this wasn't a good use of mission project energy.

Hayley is still going into the primary schools (Stranton, Ward Jackson, Jesmond Gardens, Eskdale, St Aidan's, Rift House, Kingsley) to lead assemblies and help arrange church visits. She continues to run the longstanding St Matthew's Toddlers Group as a Mission Project supported activity run for Stranton's PCC and she supports Stranton Messy Church, as she also does St Aidan's Kitchen.

The St Aidan's Friday Café, the Meditations at St Columba's at 2pm Friday, the fortnightly Pub Theology are still ongoing, as is the project support for the two Dorcas Prayer Shawl Ministries at St Luke's and St Columba's.

With the blessing of the Diocesan Mission Team and with the area Dean aware of this change, to facilitate this massive burst of energy into St Columba's in trying to do a church plant in a fifth of the time that is normal, Becky has been released from covering Stranton's 9:00am service to lead the project, with John being released from the project lead to focus on St Luke's and Stranton and being the Training Incumbent for Revd Claire. Other aspects of the Central Hartlepool Group of Churches support for each other remains the same and there is now a group set up

to look at how we can plan social events and shared worship across the group during the year.

The project has also had a major structural upheaval in that David Craig who has been an absolute stalwart to the project in being its treasurer and IT guru, is stepping back from his roles and as part of this process has stepped down as the project treasurer at the end of 2025. This has necessitated St Aidan's becoming the host parish for the project at the busiest time in the church year, Christmas. My utmost respect and thanks to David and Tony and Kathrine Batty for their work in making this possible.

In spite of this upheaval, the Mission Project pulled off an excellent and well attended Christmas Carol service with mulled wine on the 7th December, a Christmas tree festival with Father Christmas and over a hundred children attending Christingle services. We have made great links with Rift House Primary School and were offered a stall at their Christmas Fayre and they were happy for us to hand out flyers outside their school for the Family Wellbeing evenings, which nine families have now attended. Within our project's Spiritual Oasis on Wednesdays, we are starting up a Wellbeing through the Bible Group and continuing after the Spiritual Oasis, plus a Sam Well's "Being with" introductory discipleship course (1:30 to 2:30pm) starting Wednesday 28th January.
On Tuesdays, starting at 7:00pm from January 27th, we are also running a Bible Society course and because it uses excellent and informative videos, is open and accessible to all, from the just curious to the "experienced" Christian. Revd Becky will be leading as priest in charge, with the Project assisting. This teamworking approach is how to ensure there is continuity after the project ends.
In our surveys we have identified a need and call to support men's wellbeing and I have experienced lots of "God moments" in numerous conversations on this subject. If you know of any man that seems to be struggling or has in some way lost their sense of self-worth or could do with a positive friendship group, please guide them to the Central Hartlepool Group Mission Project Facebook page for further details or give them my email: patrick@hartlepoolcoh.co.uk. We are starting this Men's Wellbeing Group on Thursday 29th of January at 2.00pm.

This church plant at St Columba's is a massive undertaking for the Mission Project and for Revd Becky. If you want to become part of this exciting push back against decline and be missional in bringing Christ's presence in a tangible way to the Rift House Estate, check out our Facebook page or contact me.

They say that those who get involved in church plants bring back many skills into their own churches and they grow too. Be inspired by the great Northern Saints!

It wasn't easy for them either, but their faith in Christ made them unstoppable. That same eternal Christ is here for us too right now!
Patrick

Ward Jackson CE Primary Update

Children from Aurora and Norlina classes had a fantastic time at Karen Liddle's School of Dance Workshop!
They showcased their gymnastics, dance, and drama skills beautifully, every single one of them shone! We are so proud of you all! 🤩






Winter Warmer Event

Thank you to everyone who came along to share a meal together as part of our Ward Jackson family. Our sense of community and belonging is so important to us as a school, and we truly value everyone coming along and helping to make us who we are.

A huge thank you to the staff who stayed to help – serving, washing up, chatting, and making the night run so smoothly. Play Your Cards Right with Mr Savage was a real hit, and, yet again, the lovely Laurel Catering team provided a delicious meal. Special mention to the parents who provided the lovely cake for pudding.

As always at Ward Jackson, all our events, trips, and experiences are free of charge for our families thanks to the generous support of our sponsors, INEOS.




This Christmas, thank to a generous 'Do Something' Grant from Communities Together Durham and support from our wonderful congregation, we were able to provide our church school (Ward Jackson C of E Primary School) with 25 Christmas Hampers for families who would benefit from the most, as part of our outreach into the community.

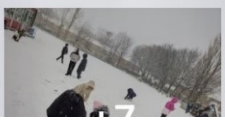
The photo shows Revd John, Mr Savage (Deputy Head) and several of the children who helped to move the hampers into the school.



There's playtime... and then there's SNOW playtime! ☃️ We enjoyed every snowy moment and had the best fun today ❄️ What a wonderful way to start the new year! 💙💛







Exciting news from Aurora Class! They've had a special delivery of new play equipment and are loving every minute of it. From climbing and exploring to developing teamwork, the children are having fun and building confidence with every step. Check out these happy faces in action!







January 2026

Well done to the Head, Staff, Governors, Academy Personnel and the Children in Ward Jackson CE Primary School for demonstrating their knowledge and performing at their best to give an accurate impression of the achievements of the 'Ward Jackson Family and it's ethos' during the recent Ofsted inspection.

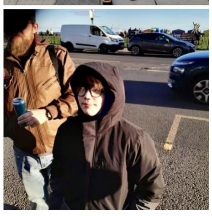
Lady Chapel Quiz Answers

L What L connects Coin, Sheep and Son?	**Lost**
A Which saint is connected to Hippo?	**Augustine**
D Which D was a Judge's barber?	**Deliah**
Y Josiah was the y _____ King of Judah?	**Youngest**
C Which C is the patron saint of shoemakers?	**St Crispin**
H H_____ of the H_____ Abide with me	**Help of the Helpless**
A Where believers were first called Christians?	**Antioch**
P Which P was a son of Eli?	**Phineas**
E What E does Jesus offer in John 3 v16	**Eternal life**
L Joel, Amos & Jonah are all part of the L____ prophets?	**Lesser**

Boys Brigade News

Boxing Day - The Cold Way





On Boxing Day morning six of our bravest Lads took part in the Boxing Day Dip at Seaton Carew - despite the cold (the temperature was 8C) needless to say our Lads were first into the Sea and last out of it.
Well done Lewis, Billy, Charlie, Kaden, Leo and Ethan.

Camp 2026 Hartlepool 4th Go International!!

This year's summer camp is from July 20th - July 25th at Bonlay Scout Centre near Edinburgh in Bonnie Scotland. We are hoping for a good number of our Lads to be going and will use camp to integrate the Year 6 Boys fully into the Company.

National Competitions - Chess

This was our best entry into this competition for several years and we won through the first two round against Lanchester and Harrogate. However, in a thrilling third round tie with many classic moves, we narrowly lost 5 - 4 at St Matthew's Community Centre to the 17th Teesside and we wish them well as they progress in the competition. Meanwhile we will use our camp as a training base to prepare for the next chess competition

Our **Christmas Carol Service** was held on the 12th December and was very well attended by our Lads and each section contributed to the service. The Anchor Boys sang Little Donkey, the Juniors played Boom Whackers and the Company Lads read the Bible passage and various prayers.

Devotions

Our early devotions this year are based on the story of Jonah, then later in the term based on the Beatitudes.

Future Dates

Open Night May 15th

Summer Fayre June 20th

Summer Camp July 20th - 25th

New Starters

We have room in each Section for new starters:-

Anchor Boys	School years 2 & 3	every Friday Night	6.00 - 7.00pm
Juniors	School years 4,5 & 6	every Monday Night	6.30 - 8.00pm
Company	School years 7 plus	every Friday Night	7.15 - 9.00pm

If you would like to see what we are up to, why not follow us on Facebook.
George Bainbridge -
07816 445829

Christmas Eve Pop Up Family Nativity Service
The Shiny Bright Sparkling Nativity



Our Christmas Eve service this year was the ‘Shiny Bright Sparkling Nativity’ which saw me dressed as a very enthusiastic star with Andrew being a very strict STARgeant! We all know the nativity story very well as we celebrate the birth of Jesus every year, but I find it very interesting when we look at different perspectives. Our nativity was not a traditional nativity to say the least. Yes, we had Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus at the centre of the stage however, the nativity focused on the role of the star and the wisemen. This causes us to think about the nativity story in a slightly different way as we focused on some of the different elements of the story. By focusing on the stars and the wise men we were able to think more about how far the wise men travelled to meet the baby Jesus. In addition, we have the amazing thing that God had a star lead the way – a shiny bright sparkling star. The conclusion of the nativity reminded everyone that although the stars are bright, Jesus is the light of the world and the brightest light there is.
We welcomed many families to this service, and it was lovely to see everyone join in with the actions and words. I look forward to seeing what this year’s nativity brings.

Kate

What's your word for 2026

A new year begins.
It's like opening a brand new journal.
The fresh new pages waiting to be written in.
What will this year bring?
The word that I woke up with on the 1st of January was:
Intentional
The dictionary definition -
To be intentional means to act with purpose, making deliberate choices and conscious decisions that align with your values, goals, and desired outcomes, rather than just letting things happen to you.

I want to live this life intentionally.
To stop and think before I act.
I know that this is not an easy thing to implement, as generally,
I am impulsive.

Jesus was intentional in His relationships with his disciples.
He listened well. He gave them His time.
Everyone else who came near Him felt that they were the most important person in His life.
He intentionally stopped. He didn't see them as an interruption but an opportunity to show them they were loved.

He was also intentional with His time of rest and time alone with His father.
He couldn't do all that He did without timeout.

I want to intentionally make more time to be with God.

Years ago, there was a movement where these letters were on everything, especially bracelets.
WWJD- What would Jesus do?

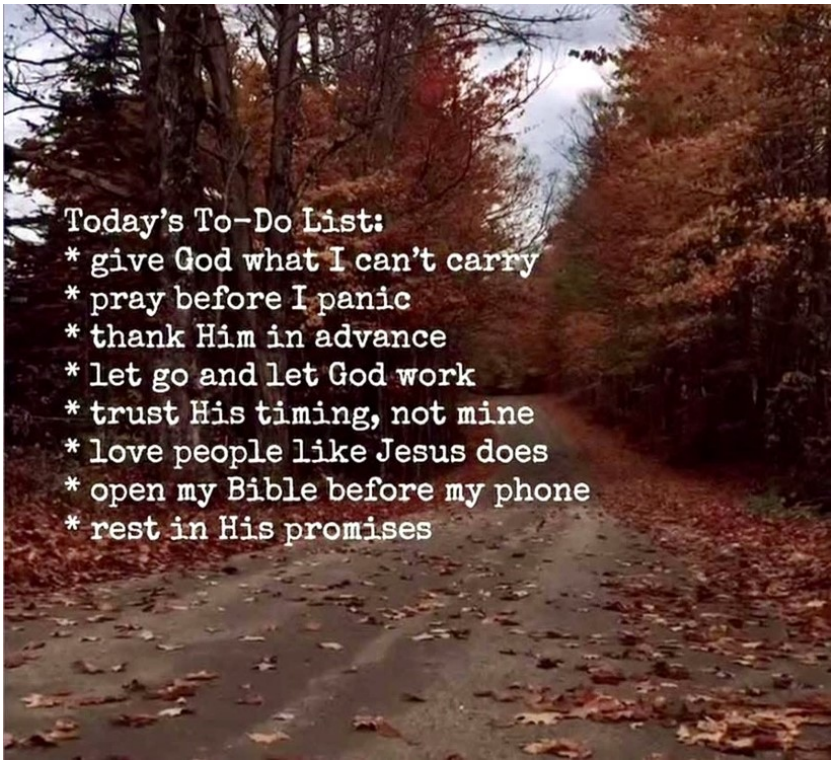
I want to bring that back this year! It will help me intentionally stop and ask Jesus before making a decision.

My verse as I start the year is:-

> Be quick to listen (to the Holy Spirit and others)
> Slow to speak (ask Holy Spirit what to say)
> Slow to become angry (don't be easily offended)

James 1:19

So what's your word for 2026?
Ang Hall



MiracleIn in 2026

'MiracleIn' means 'Miracle or 'by the hand of God' in Ukrainian.

This year's February has:
4 Sundays
4 Mondays
4 Tuesdays
4 Wednesdays
4 Thursdays
4 Fridays
4 Saturdays.

This happens once every 823 years, so we are very blessed - many future generations will not experience this…

Central Group After Christmas Meal

On Friday 16th January about forty members of the congregations of St Aidan's, St Luke's and Stranton met in the Upper Room at the Golden Lion Pub for what is becoming an annual social event to start the new year.

Everyone had chosen from a delicious three course menu – the food and service was up to its usual high standard and everyone enjoyed eating and chatting as the evening progressed. Thanks go to Julia from St Luke's who had laid on a quiz with a fruit picture round and a multiple choice question round, with a 'spot the connection' twist at the end. Good fun, enjoyed by all.

A raffle with six lovely prizes raised money for St Aidan's Kitchen.

Many thanks to Helen and Kathrine from St Aidan's who put so much effort into arranging the evening, collating menu choices and collecting money, plus organising the raffle. Your hard work was greatly appreciated by everyone.









Update on Past Ordinand in Training at Stranton
Revd Anita Burke

Congratulations to the Revd Anita Burke who was licensed yesterday as Priest in Charge of Christ Church, New Seaham by Bishop Sarah. Please keep Anita and the parish in your prayers as she takes on this role. 🎉✝️🙏



St Matthew's
Community Centre
Elwick Road

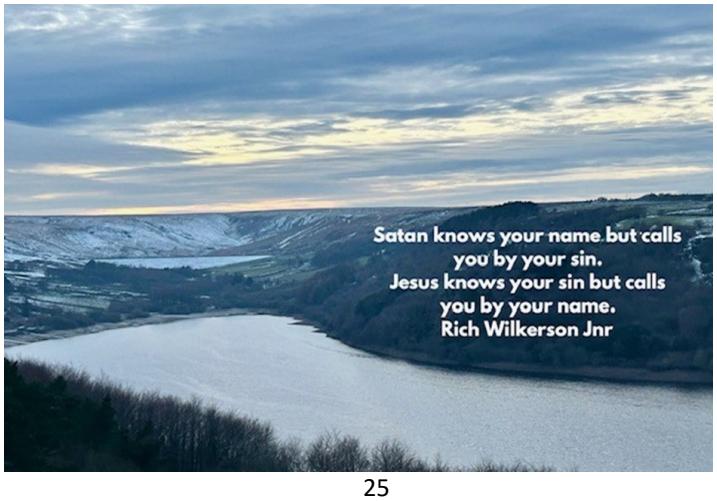
Coffee Cake Company

Coffee or Tea, Cake and Company

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

Saturday 7th February 2026

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



CELEBRATE!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!
to

Loralye Benson
Caitlin Bruce
Angela Craig
Duncan Playfor
Jess Playfor
Patrick Reeve
Sue Rumney
Gill Siddons



Special Happy 70th Birthday
Jacqui Rogers







Congratulations on the Engagement
In December 2025
of
Abigail Craig to Dan Moye

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

Thurs 5th	Discover Hope	Stranton Church	7:00-9:00pm
Sat 7th	Coffee Cake & Chat	St Matthew's CC	2:00-4:00pm
Sun 8th	Messy Church	St Matthew's CC	4:00-5:30pm
Sat 14th	Stranton Wedding's Through The Years	Stranton Church	10:00-4:00pm
Sat 21st	Away Day with St Luke's	Venue to be confirmed	10:00-4:00pm
Sun 15th	'Sundays at 6'	Stranton Church	6:00pm

Lent Course - Stranton and St Luke's
Thursday 5th March 7:00-9:00pm for four weeks
at St Luke's Rooms

Central Hartlepool Group Mission Project

Sun 1st Feb	Family Candlemas service	St Columba's	4:00pm
Wed 11th	Pub Theology Group meet	Jackson's Wharf (alternate Wed's)	7:00pm
Sun 15th	A 'Your Church' service	St Columba's	4:00pm
Tuesdays	A Bible Society course	St Columba's	7:00pm
Wednesdays	Spiritual Oasis with Wellbeing through the Bible Group Followed by Sam Well's "Being with" introductory discipleship course	St Columba's	1:30 to 2:30pm
Thursdays	Men's Wellbeing Group	St Columba's	2.00pm
Fridays	Drop in Café	St Aidan's	10:00-12:00pm
	Meditation	St Columba's	2:00pm



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:	r**evdjohnbell@stranton-church.org.uk**	
Curate		
Revd Claire Mead	(Stranton & St Luke's)	07598 070481
Email:	**curate@stranton-church.org.uk**	
	Usual day off – Friday	
Readers		
Mary Tones	40a Blakelock Road	07972 342890
Hayley Liversidge	hayey@hartlepoolcch.coh.org.uk	07712 008772
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)	
Email:	**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.