ALL SAINTS, STRANTON CHURCH
HARTLEPOOL

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2025

Rooted in God's love,
Growing together with Jesus,
Branching out in the power of the Spirit.

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Vicar's Report for Stranton Church 2025

When I prepared my report for last year's APCM, I spoke of 2025 and beyond as being a time of having much to look forward to, and much to challenge us. I spoke of looking into renewing our vision for our church, and our community, asking questions around who we are, and who God wants us to be, as we seek to grow in relationship with him, go deeper in our faith, and reach out to those around us, and of looking at how we do church, and how we might want to do that differently – our worship, our service styles and service times, whether we want or need to reorder the church to increase the adaptability and accessibility of our church building, while balancing all of this with the increasing pressures on our finances.

In some ways, on the face of things, not much has changed, but we have moved forward in many areas and continue to explore others with a view to building on what we have here at Stranton, and how we serve the community around us. We will continue to look forward to all that God has in store for us in 2026 and in the years to come.

Sadly, over the course of 2025, we have once again said goodbye to a dear friend, Geoffrey Webster, and we give thanks for his life, and for the lives of all those dear to each of us who died during 2025.

As always, there are so many people who are and have been involved in so many different aspects of church life here at Stranton that without all of you, our church would not continue to survive or thrive. So, I want to continue by saying a heartfelt thank you to all who have served the ministry of our parish over the course of 2025 – Revd Andrew, Revd Kevin and Revd Tony, Mary, Hayley, Kate, Jordan, Angela, Rohan and everyone else who has led or spoken at any of our services throughout the year, as well as all those who have led our intercessions, read scripture, prepared for communion services, welcomed people in to the church, driven the tech, served refreshments and any one of a multitude of other tasks that keep us on course on a Sunday morning, a Wednesday morning, and at our other special services throughout the year. A huge thank you also to Angela and Peter, our church wardens; David, our treasurer; Andrew, our Lay Vice Chair; Maureen, our PCC Secretary; Jacqui, our Parish Safeguarding Officer; and Trish, our Parish Administrator, all of whom have helped keep me on track over the last year, as well as everyone who serves on our PCC.

To all of you, however you serve the life of our church – thank you. There are many more opportunities for you to get involved in the life of our church, if you have more to give. We are all called to be Christ-like, we are all called not to be served but to serve. We all have a part – no matter how great or small, to play in the life of Stranton church, so please do pray into where God is calling you to serve our church family at this time. We want, I want, our church to grow and flourish, and I encourage you all to play a part in the life of our church family. If you want to explore how you can use your own particular skills and gifts then please do let me know – I would much rather you were involved doing something you enjoy than in being roped into something you'd really rather not be doing.

As Jacqui has reminded us in her Safeguarding Report, Safeguarding is, and always will be, the responsibility of each and everyone one of us – not just those in leadership. Our Safeguarding policies are designed to protect the most vulnerable in our communities, to protect the church, and to protect you, the volunteer, in the roles that you undertake. It's important that we have a PSO who is active within the church, easily recognisable, and committed to improving our Safeguarding within the Parish – I am grateful that Jacqui is in this role and if any of you do have any Safeguarding concerns then please contact, Jacqui Rogers (PSO at Stranton), myself or Beth Miller, the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.

Like 2024, 2025 has been an eventful year, with lots to be thankful for, as well as plenty to reflect on and challenge us too. As a PCC, we came together with St Luke's PCC to participate in the PCC Tonight Course, as we continued the journey of discovering who we are and why we are here. We welcomed Revd Claire, who was ordained in June, as our curate, thanking God for the gifts she brings, and we look forward to her priesting in 2026. We have seen Hayley Licensed as an LLM, and Kate authorised

as a Lay Children's Minister – and who is continuing to explore where God is calling her. Until recently, we were blessed by the leading and preaching of Mother Becky, as part of our Group, and she has been released with our best wishes to focus on the revitalisation of St Columba's in Rift House. This has naturally led to some challenges as we look at our service patterns and how we can maintain our existing services both on a Sunday and during the week, and this is something we will be revisiting in 2026.

In July, many people were confirmed at our Deanery confirmation service at St Aidan's, including a good number of people from here at Stranton – Daniel, Hassan and Sinna, Ayoola, Lisa, and Lisa, Tristan & Loralye. It was wonderful to see and this year our Deanery Confirmation service will be here at Stranton so if you would like to explore confirmation in 2026 then do have a chat with me - there's still time for us to explore this together.

Towards the end of 2025, after much debate and discussion, we decided that our Group Council had served its purpose (at least for the time being) and we would instead turn our focus towards opportunities to socialise together as a group and come together for special events where we can worship God together outside the confiners of normal Sunday services. Alongside this, the legal hosting of the Group Mission Project was handed over from Stranton to St Aidan's, as most of the activity is being undertaken at St Columba's and in Rift House. This did lead to some concerns but good communication has ensured a smooth transition and I am particularly grateful to David, and to Tony Batty for the parts they both played in this.

Over the course of 2026 and beyond, we have much to look forward to, and much to challenge us. We are still looking into renewing our vision for our church, and our community, and we are continuing to ask those questions around who we are, and who God wants us to be – both within our parish and across the wider town. As I mentioned earlier, we will be continuing to explore how we do church, and how we might want to do that, whether we want or need to reorder the church to increase the adaptability and accessibility of our church building, as well as what we can do to promote the use of St Matthew's. These are questions we'll be asking, praying into, and seeking answers to, as we discern God's will for us in this coming period. We'll balance this within the constraints of our finances and periods of fallow are perfectly normal and okay, but we do need to pull together now, or we're going to be facing serious financial difficulties that could have a really damaging impact on our ability to focus beyond ourselves and serve the wider community within our parish, and to do the good work we do in mission.

Above all, I still continue to pray for the future of our church here in Hartlepool, and for each and every one of you, praying for growth – both in numbers of people coming to know God, and in our individual and gathered depth of relationship with, and faith in, Him. I pray that God will equip all of us to serve His church in the way that He wants us to serve – reaching out into the community with the gifts and skills He gives us, asking Lord Jesus to show us his way.

In Grace and Peace,

Revd John (Priest in Charge)

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

All Saints, Stranton Church is situated in Church Row, Hartlepool TS24 7QT. It is part of the Diocese of Durham within the Church of England. The correspondence address is Stranton Church Office, St Matthew's Community Centre, Arncliffe Gardens Entrance, Hartlepool TS26 9JF.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity excepted from registration with the Charity Commission

PCC members who have served from 1st January 2024 until the date this report was approved are:

Priest in Charge: Revd John Bell *(ex-officio)* Chairperson

Curate *Revd Claire Mead (ex-oficio)*

Reader:	Mary Tones *(ex-officio)*	
Wardens:	Mrs Angela Craig	
	Mr Peter Anderson	
Representatives on the Deanery Synod:		
	Mr Andrew Rogers	
	Mr Ken Shepherd	
Elected members:	Mrs Maureen Anderson	Secretary
	Mr David Craig	Treasurer
	Mrs Diane Greenwood	
	Mr David House	
	Miss Kate Lawson	
	Mrs Cheryl Mills	
	Mrs Jacqui Rogers	
	Mr Jordan Thornhill	

The full PCC met six times during the year with an average level of attendance of 70.9%. Committees met between meetings and minutes of their deliberations were received by the full PCC and discussed where necessary.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

ELECTORAL ROLL

There are 53 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll, parish. On name was removed during the year

Ken Shepherd
Electoral Roll Officer

FINANCE REPORT

The financial result for the year was effectively a break – even: a small deficit of £991 on operations in our General Fund and Community Centre was offset by surplus £3,715 interest received in our Windrim Trust (Restricted - Church Maintenance) account, an overall surplus on operations of £2,724: but a fall in the carrying value of the Windrim Trust investments held on our behalf by the diocese of £5,551 was also recorded. We had budgeted for a surplus of nearly £8,000, but I note with some concern that our regular giving fell 8% short of budget and we also suffered from holding fewer "occasional" services than usual with both offertories and Parish retained Fees falling short of budget by approximately 60%. On the plus side, given that we had no major projects or schemes in force, we benefited from considerable unrestricted one -off giving roughly double the anticipated amount. But this itself presents a challenge to convert such non – recurrent giving into a regular more certain income stream for the future.

As I write this report, we are approximately halfway through our Church's 900th anniversary celebrations, recognising the example and witness of All the Saints who have preceded us and the life and faith of our present congregation and community. It is a good thing to have fundraising events and occasions for celebration in our community but we are also enjoined in Scripture to meet the needs of the Church by responding to God's great gift to us of new life in Jesus, through planned prayerful giving and commitment to meeting the needs of the saints along with the principle of tithing the first fruits of our lives to His service.

This was the first year for some time in which we have not had a major scheme of one kind or another – our stewardship of our wonderful church building in recent years has included repairs to the South clerestory roof, new audio-visual systems, accessible facilities, re-tuning and re-hanging the Church Bells, re-pointing and renewing tower stonework and clock faces. 2025 was also the last of the five and a half years in which we committed to hosting the Mission project, which we have now passed on to a new focus in the Rift house area of town under the umbrella of our sister Parish of St Aidan with St Columba. With the "Decks cleared" of all these projects I feel that in the light of our financial position we now need to pay some attention to our ongoing financial commitments along with our re-dedication of our talents and time. We have not held any kind of giving campaign because of these project appeals, but I do now commend to you as members of our church for your prayerful consideration and renewed action the underpinning of reviewing and recommitting our regular giving, for which I am providing to Church members a recommendation for widening our active use of the Parish Giving Scheme.

David Craig
MA (Cantab) ACA: Hon Treasurer.

BUILDING AND FABRIC OF THE CHURCH

Thank you to everyone who, in the past year has in so many ways helped our Church and Community in Christian service. As Churchwardens we acknowledge and give thanks for the time and gifts dedicated by members in serving at Church and St Matthews Community Centre - practical tasks like providing refreshments, gardening, seasonal decorations, minor repairs, cleaning and maintenance, support for our services, leading worship and children's activities, reading, praying and meeting for various committees : a big 'Thank you' from the Churchwardens particularly to Rohan Wanduragala and David House our assistant churchwardens for their continued help and support. David especially helps by enabling our church to be open to the public on Saturday mornings 10.00 till 12.00 Easter to end of September.

Thanks also to all who have taken up roles with leading and developing our young people and the support given to this by Jordan, Mary, Hayley, Kate and Helen.

We would very much appreciate your continued support and help.

We need to recruit new churchwardens. Please consider this now so that an introduction and training can be started before a crisis time arises. Have a chat with us or Revd John.

Buildings

- Routine Inspections/servicing were completed as required for clock, central heating, fire extinguisher and intruder alarm systems.
- Periodic fixed wire testing in Church has been completed satisfactorily, with minor problems dealt with promptly.
- The door frames of both the east and west doors have been repaired and repainted and draught excluder applied, with some remedial surrounding pointing and filling of the surrounding stonework. The doors have been oiled including the main entrance door.
- Minor maintenance tasks including gutter repairs and fall pipe checks and path cleaning are carried out as required and in accordance with a routine maintenance schedule recorded in the Church Logbook.
- There is remaining a considerable backlog of maintenance in the St Matthews Community Centre which the Churchwardens and PCC will continue to support the Committee in addressing.
- An inspection of articles (communion plate, furniture and equipment) belonging to the church (as in the terrier) has been done (May 2025).
- Church yard and flower borders: Our thanks to the Council for maintaining the church grounds and rose beds and checking on the safety of the gravestones, and grass cutting.
- Thanks go to Camerons Brewery for their co-operation in managing our shared car parking, and in keeping a weather eye on our security.
- Thanks also to Pam Stockton for looking after the flower borders that line our main church path.

Health and Safety Report

Health and Safety Audit of the church was carried out most recently in May 2025. The following matters are noted from that inspection:

- The rear path lighting has been renewed; this should make accessing the new Stranton@ six service and evening groups safer and better.
- The tower ladder and hatch for roof access do not meet current safety regulations for working at height: this area is not normally accessible to the public: so, it is now a restricted area and hard hat warning signs are in place. We have taken specialist advice and help in planning for the fund-raising abseiling from our tower roof event which is planned as one part of the many 900th anniversary events. We look forwards to celebrating the 900th anniversary events and pray that this may be a time of reaching out to people in our community as well as church members.

Angela Craig, Peter Anderson
Churchwardens

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

The Synod met twice during the year, in February at St Oswald's and November at Stranton.

In February the guest speaker was Amy Burns, who is our Head of Programme Delivery for the Diocesan Transformation vision, based at Cuthbert House (the Diocesan administrative HQ). After Amy's talk we were encouraged to discuss a couple of topics; how can we grow mission and how can we grow churches? The offer for Amy or one of her colleagues to speak to our PCCs is open. They would be delighted to talk to those on the front line.

The November meeting focussed more on the Vacancy Audit Process (the VAP, another acronym, sorry!) and Deanery planning. The VAP starts when a parish goes into a vacancy and it encourages the parish to give itself a long hard look and identify its strategic and missional strengths and weaknesses. It is recognised that this can be an uncomfortable process, but worthwhile.

The Deanery Synod continues to look for ways to energise the Anglican worshipping communities in the town, encouraging parishes to think more collectively. One of the useful features of the Synods is a "We tried this" item where parishes can discuss their highlights and failures, offering others the benefit of their experiences.

Deanery Synods are an important part of the hierarchy of the Anglican Church as a conduit for information flow both from the top down and the bottom up.

Andrew Rogers

SAFEGUARDING - CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION

Safeguarding is the responsibility of every person in Stranton Parish and any concerns should be immediately directed to the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Revd John.

Our Safeguarding Officer details are clearly signposted in all the Parish buildings, on our website and in Signpost magazine. Safeguarding is discussed at every PCC meeting.

We regularly update and oversee all the safeguarding checks required by the Diocese and the Church of England. We ensure that all roles within the parish and its associated groups are safer recruited and a clear job description is in place, we also ensure that DBS checks are carried out and updated as appropriate and the necessary training courses are completed and updated.

In the last year Durham Diocese's Safeguarding policies and procedures and their implementation was audited and came out as 'robust'.

A data breach by a DBS subcontractor, affecting a large number of Dioceses nationwide, occurred in August 2025 which impacted on a number of individuals in our parish. Despite receiving notification

on the Bank Holiday Weekend the safeguarding team was able to inform all those affected within 24 hours. This was quickly followed up by further information and support for those affected instigated by the Diocese. The Safeguarding Team at Cuthbert House followed up any concerns and asked for feedback from Parishes on the impact and response.

A number of safeguarding issues and concerns have been reported, all were recorded and followed up as required, some being discussed with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer to clarify actions and to seek advice if further action was required.

Jacqui Rogers
Safeguarding Officer

GATHERED WORSHIP IN STRANTON PARISH

There is a regular pattern of worship services across the parish, both weekly and monthly. The services are held in Church and St Matthew's Hall. Each service has its own characteristics. We hope and pray that there is something for those who have been part of a worshipping community for a long time and those attending for the first time. The pattern is summarised as follows –

Stranton Church

Sundays

9:00	Holy Communion	A quiet said service using traditional liturgy
11:00	Morning Worship Holy Communion Lighthouse Service (provision for all ages)	Each Sunday has a different characteristic. Generally the services are relaxed and welcoming including a mix of contemporary music and hymns. 1st and 3rd Sundays include communion 4th Sunday, Lighthouse is a good service to try if you are new to church, it includes welcomes for families wanting baptism.

St Matthew's Community Centre

4:00 second Sunday of month	Messy Church	A service for families based around craft, story and sharing tea together
10:00 Wednesday	Holy Communion	A said midweek communion in a more accessible venue.

WORSHIP TEAM

The last year has been transitional for the worship team, with the core Sunday morning being mainly solo. In previous years, we've had a small group of worship leaders, including singers and instrumentalists, while this year it's mainly been me plus one or two stepping in. At times, this has been challenging, but it's also given greater freedom and has left space for the Spirit to lead extended times of worship where it's felt right.

We've also begun hosting a monthly "Sundays at 6" service, and this has been a great addition to our regular pattern of worship. As well as being a more relaxed service that is more accessible to those not available on a Sunday morning, it has been a good "testing ground" for new songs and contemporary worship, some of which have then been used on Sunday mornings. I believe that this can be a way to attract people to the church and diversify how we reach out to new people.

The goal for 2026/27 is to continue developing the worship at All Saints Stranton while seeking new opportunities to connect with our congregation and the wider community

Jordan Thornhill

TODDLERS

I took over the running of Toddlers in June 2022. It continues to be popular attracting between about 13-21 children plus their accompanying adults each session.

Despite the availability of 30 hours free childcare for infants over 9 months, and children now starting school nursery at 2 years old it is still doing well with the help of advertising by word of mouth and social media.

It is busy but there is a lovely atmosphere, and it is great to see the youngsters smiling, laughing and having fun, enjoying a nutritious snack then later setting down to sing nursery rhymes.

As always, it is heavily dependent upon the help of volunteers to be able to run it. My sincere thanks to Rohan & Diana Wanduragala and Mary Tones who put in such hard work to ensure it runs smoothly. It is very much appreciated. Without them this important ministry could not happen.

Currently we could do with more volunteers. Some to help on a rota basis with the snack in the kitchen and others to help set up first thing in the morning or coming in briefly at 11am to help put things away. This would particularly be for when a volunteer is away so can't help. If you are interested, please let me know.

This remains a wonderful outreach to the local community.

Thank you for your continued prayerful support.

Hayley Liversidge,
Communities Children and Families Worker

CENTRAL HARTLEPOOL GROUP MISSION TEAM

Back in August 2025 I had to complete an ASD form for the Diocese showing progress against targets for the Central Hartlepool Group Mission Project. It seems that many such similar projects around the diocese / country although doing a lot of good while active, did not leave much in sustainable results once they closed. In this report, Ali from the Diocesan Mission Team spotted the signs of green shoots up at St Columba's and asked us to focus our attention in this area as it had the potential to grow into a church plant.

From this point onwards, the targets set by the Diocese for the Central Hartlepool Group Mission Project were to focus on St Columba's to work towards this becoming a church plant in Rift House as there is no church serving this area. They set very stretching targets.

In February, I was asked to complete a new report using a new system. It was in completing this report I realised just how well we were doing against those targets:

Averages taken over 3 weeks in January / February.

Average weekly attendance: (services added together) **Target 30**, **Actual 34** (17 different individuals)

A**verage weekly attendance St Aidan's Friday café Actual 21, Average 11:00 Café service 10.**

Kids attendance: Target 5, Actual 4

Youth attendance: Target 2 Actual 0

YA attendance: Target 3 Actual 3

Small group/discipleship engagement: Target 12 Actual 13

New/returned Christians: Target 10 Actual 6

No. Planned Givers: Target 2 Actual 0 but in this 6 month period £607 in donations!

Attendees involved in serving/volunteering: Target 5 Actual 4

No. at Alpha/or similar: Target 15 Actual 9

In spite of these targets, I have ensured that other areas of the project have continued to be supported; Toddlers at St Matthews, The Dorcas Group at St Luke's and St Columba's, The Pub Theology etc.

Unfortunately, the contract for Hayley as our children and families' worker ends at the end of June. I am ensuring that all aspects of her work, especially her list of valuable contacts is collated and passed onto the respective churches within the group and that a healthy handover occurs with the Toddlers group as well.

As my job title indicates, "Mission Enabler" I am doing everything possible to enable mission to occur at St Columba's as per the Diocesan set targets for the project. I have been blessed with witnessing the Holy Spirit at work here with numerous little God moments so know that God is walking with us on this road to Emmaus. Every time an obstacle gets in the way, God the awesome infinite Satnav lights up a better way, His way.

When this project succeeds and St Columba's becomes a vibrant faith community again, I am sure the Diocese will use this as a model for more outreach and church growth

Patrick Reeve
Mission Enabler

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MESSY CHURCH

Messy Church for families is on the second Sunday of the month at 4-5.30pm in St Matthew's Hall. At Easter we have Messy Easter on Good Friday morning (which ties in with Eggheads in Holy Week) and on the second Sunday of December we have a Messy Christingle Service in church. The families who attend are a mix of those who attend the 11am service at Stranton, those who only attend Messy church and those who are invited to attend a service prior to a Welcome or Baptism of children. Attendance varies between thirty to forty plus people in total, some families have been attending for several years and there is always potential for developing deeper relationships and growth with support. Consent forms and risk assessment have been updated as required and we had a fire drill in March.

We play table games for 15 minutes until everyone has arrived, then we tell a Bible story, say a prayer and sing a song. This year Kate Lawson or Rev. Claire have lead a separate short 20 minute activity with the small group of teenagers, during the story time. After this there are activities and crafts to complete based on the story, Last Autumn we learnt about The Kingdom of God: The Mustard Seed, The yeast in bread and the Pearl of great price. This spring we have learnt about New Beginnings: Creation, Noah's Ark and The Tower of Babel. Then we have a tasty tea together, provided by Maureen and Peter. This winter we've introduced warm food e.g. hotdogs and fish fingers and smiley faces.

The Messy Church Team is small but committed, many thanks to Messy Church Team Hayley Liversidge, Peter and Maureen Anderson. Also for their help: Revd John and Daniel Bell, Revd Claire, Rev. Kevin Tones, Tyler and Lorelai Anderson, Helen Threfall, Kate Lawson, Michael Gillies, Diana Wanduragala, Luke and Mark Tones. Thanks also to Trish Playfor for help with photocopying etc for crafts. Any help to set up tables, chairs etc from 3pm, help with crafts and activities and socialise with families from 4pm, wash up or tidy away from 4.30pm would be gratefully accepted!

Mary Tones

SUNDAY CLUB

Sunday Club numbers have been low and variable with 0-4 children attending at times. During this year we started a bespoke curriculum focusing on Jesus and forming a firm foundation of faith for

our children. I would like to thank all of the leaders and helpers for Sunday Club this year, who have volunteered their time to help. Thank you to Mary, Pam, Gill and Helen. We are continuing to try to find more volunteers to help with Sunday Club to either lead sessions or support them as a helper. We continue to pray that our Sunday Club grows in numbers, love and faith.

Kate Lawson

Brownies	2nd STRANTON Hartlepool BROWNIES	Guides	10th STRANTON Hartlepool GUIDES	Rangers	2nd STRANTON Hartlepool RANGERS

The Brownies, Guides and Rangers have been busy with lots of different activities during the year.

Spring term always has the most important day in our calendar, the 22nd of February when we celebrate World Thinking Day. There is always a Hartlepool Division event, where the whole town meets together, doing international activities. Our Brownies, Guides and Rangers always have our own celebration. We play games and do crafts from other countries, eat food, individually light candles to remember the countries that belong to the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS). We have had several craft evenings, especially for Mothering Sunday and Easter. The Brownies were involved in Egghead going on the Monday, several girls attending other nights.

The summer term when we try to get out as much as possible, dependant on the weather. One of the favourite places to go is to the Headland investigating what can be found in the rock pools. It was not the best of weather to be on the coast but as Lara had chosen this activity to Celebrate the gaining of her GOLD AWARD, it went ahead, with her choice of food - hotdogs and cake. We also completed the Fun badge – the Chip Shop Hike at Seaton, evening of outdoor cooking and the other favourite for the last evening of the year, sandcastles and chips.

The final big activity of the term was the camp for long weekend, joining the 4th Norton group. The Brownies, Guides and Rangers attended, the Brownies staying indoors while the Guides and Rangers were under canvas. All had an amazing time, making new friends, catching up with friends from past camps, lots of varied activities plus plenty of food.

The Autumn term always seems busy. We started the year doing crafts for the display in Church for Harvest, attending Harvest Festival Parade service. In September we were informed that someone was interested in being a leader, as she lived close to our meeting place was willing to visit. She made the decision on the evening to join us as a leader.

Hartlepool Division have activities for all age groups, Brownies - Disco, Guides and Rangers - meal out at Sambucas, a Campfire and cinema visit for all ages, we join with them for the Remembrance Day Parade.

NEE Girlguiding organised a Special event for Guide and Rangers – Monopoly Day. The girls went to Newcastle, for the day, using mobile phones, logged onto the app for the day to complete all the Challenges. They had an amazing day but were worn out by all the walking.

The Guides completed the Thrift interest badge. Brownies, Guides and Rangers sorted out items of clothing that could be passed on to a Charity. They had a visit from Natalie of ReLoved clothing, who chatted with them, explaining the ethos behind the charity. Luckily, she came with a large car to take all the bags of donated clothing.

We also did a linked activity for our contribution to the decorations for Church for Christmas. We managed among all the activities to support three Brownies and a Guide to complete their Gold Award, which were presented, near the end of the term, along with cakes for all. The girls had a PJ Erving with hot Chocolate and the last evening was our Christmas Party.

Cheryl Mills (Leader)

4th Hartlepool Boys Brigade
Founded 1930
HQ - St. Matthews Community Centre
Find us on Facebook

Revd John Bell has accepted the role of Company Chaplain

We have a new Warrant Officer Mrs Kevia Simmons. She is waiting for a suitable training course which will enable her to become Lieutenant, Kevia serves in all three sections of our Company

Sadly one of our former helpers John Lauderdale (Church Secretary of Oxford Road Baptist Church for many years) died in September. He was a great servant to the BB in Hartlepool

Anchor Boys (5- 8years) we have a loyal following of 10 boys but we are always looking for more new starters
Juniors (8-11 yeas) we have 23 boys
Company Section (11 +) we have 23 boys

Highlights

Anchor Boys visited Seaton beach – sand castling, Stranton Church and took part in Easter Eggheads.

Juniors visited 360 in Brenda road, Seaton beach, Blue Lagoon, Crimdon Dene Easter Eggheads Stranton Church and McDonalds. Captain Wells of the TA visited to talk about Remembrance Day.

The Company Section visited Blue Lagoon, Go Climb, Castle Eden Dene, Wynyard Woodland and had a BBQ. They camped, for a week, at Birch Scout Centre near Scarborough. Our chess team won three rounds in the National Boys Brigade National Competition and we hosted one round of the National Quiz Competition at St Matthew's

All the sections supported the Harvest Festival, Boys Brigade Christmas Carol Service and the Parade Service with Bacon Butties at St Matthew's.

After many years we now have a band and a three tier NCO System.

George Bainbridge, Leader in Charge, 4th Hartlepool Boys Brigade

PASTORAL GROUP

The team comprises Cheryl Mills, Gill Siddons, Ian Walker, Rohan Wanduragala and myself, with Diana Wanduragala as an associate member. We continue to hold regular meetings, which are attended by Revd John whenever he is able. Curate Revd Claire Mead has also been attending meetings this year.

Towards the end of the year, we were joined by Licensed Lay Minister, Hayley Liversidge, who is completing a module on Pastoral Care as part of her training. She will be shadowing pastoral visits over the next few months.

We continue to maintain regular contact with members of our congregation who cannot get to church and with others who appreciate some support or company. This may be in the form of home visits, home communion, telephone calls, meeting for walks or coffee or other ad hoc support. We also deliver Christmas and Easter cards, usually with a small gift, and a plant for Mother's Day. Most of those we visit are living at home, whilst some live in local care homes. Others have spells in hospital or care homes during times of illness or special need and, during these times, we make every effort to maintain contact and make visits to them. One of the people we visit has moved into a care home this year.

Our aim is to maintain links to, and inclusion in, the church community for those who, often after many years of faithful attendance and service, are no longer physically able to attend church services. Those links are also strengthened by the regular delivery of weekly notice sheets by Angela and David Craig and Ian Walker, as well as copies of 'Signpost' and bible notes delivered by pastoral visitors and others. Informal or impromptu pastoral care is provided by fellow members of the congregation and by the leadership team as we work together to maintain a watchful eye on our congregations and provide support when it is needed.

We have continued to look at ways of providing bereavement support and Revd Claire is moving this forward with a view to setting up a system to maintain contact with bereavement families following the funeral, in the coming months.

There are cards at the back of church which can be used by anyone wanting to request pastoral support either for themselves or, if you have a concern, please have a word with Revd John, Revd Claire or a member of the team.

Pam Stockton

BELLRINGING REPORT

Ringing at Stranton on alternative Wednesdays and Sundays has continued throughout the year. We tend to have a band of around 10 on practice nights and 6-8 on Sunday mornings. The band continues to make progress with the standard of ringing.

We also rang to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe day in May and Victory in Japan in August.

In addition we managed to ring throughout the day to mark the Art College graduation services at Stranton over the summer and we are looking to do the same again for 2026.

4 Quarter peals where rung at Stranton across the course of 2025.

As the bells have been recently refurbished, there's has been no required work in the bell chamber in this year.

Joseph Wilson
Stranton Tower Captain

ST MATTHEW'S COMMUNITY CENTRE ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT

During 2025 the St Matthew's Committee have been working more closely with Stranton Church PCC in order to align our practices to complement those of the PCC and satisfy the requirements of The Charities' Commission. As a result we have updated and modified many protocols and procedures throughout the year. We have also undertaken the required 5 year electrical inspection and implemented necessary improvements, particularly to the emergency lighting system. A new Fire Risk Assessment has also been completed and the small improvements recommended have been implemented.

Considering health and safety we have adopted a recognised colour coding system for all cleaning materials in specific areas of the building, thereby reducing possible cross contamination between the respective areas. During 2026 we will updating all health and safety policies to conform with the recommendations of the government Health and Safety Executive.

Late afternoon and evening hall bookings in 2025 have remained more or less steady when compared to 2024 but we have not achieved any significant growth particularly for daytime bookings. This is an issue we need to address, and since we know most daytime bookings are as a result of personal recommendation or social media we must increase our social media presence which at the moment is almost non-existent. In attempt to advertise the facilities we can offer at St Matthew's, fliers have been produced which we leave with occasional users and at events for the public to increase awareness and hopefully bookings.

In September we discussed and agreed to increase hall rental rates for all users except party bookings. These new rates are an average increase of 12% compared to 2025 and are effective form January 2026. These rates are still competitive when compared to other centres.

Two major issues have consumed much time, effort and discussion during this last year. These are roof and stone repairs to the east end of the building and internal redecoration. The committee agreed the latter cannot take place until the former has been resolved, although the painting of the radiators in the large hall by one committee member has produced significant improvement. As regards the building work, we need to start again to identify a suitable contractor and source funding through grant givers and/or other fundraising activities.

Carol Laud