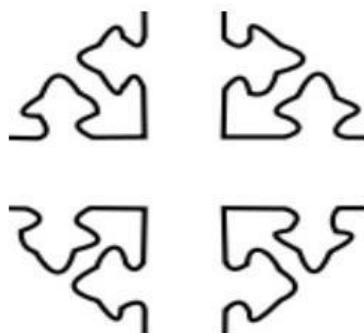


**St. Mark's Church, Natland
Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council
for the Year Ended 31st December 2023**



**Follow Daily Care Deeply
Speak Boldly Tread Gently**

St. Mark's Church, Natland – Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council for the Year Ended 31st December 2023

From The 'New' Vicarage

Dear Friends

Welcome to this Annual Report for 2023 which, as with previous years, is full of information about what we have been able to do in this past year. Once again it has been a busy year with lots of people giving of their time, talents and/or resources in varied ways in service to God and to our local communities.

'Follow Daily, Care Deeply, Tread Gently and Speak Boldly' are the four themes at the heart of our vision for the Diocese of Carlisle and the ecumenical county of Cumbria and I hope that as you read this report you will notice them too weaving their way through our work and worship, and mission and ministry, as God's church here in our parish and local community.

Do enjoy reading this report as we look back, as we look around and as we look forward. Do also consider whether there might be something you could be involved within the life of St Mark's Church and the wider parish. We do a lot but there is so much more we could do (or things we could do differently) as well to reach out with God's love and good news.

With God's blessing and very much gratitude for your support and partnership in the Gospel,

Angela

The Rev'd Canon Angela Whittaker
Priest in Charge
March 2024

Administrative Information.

St. Mark's Church is situated on The Green, Natland. It is part of the Diocese of Carlisle within the Church of England. The correspondence address is The Vicarage, 18 St. Mark's Fold, Natland, Kendal, LA9 7QU.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) in 2023 was a charity excepted from registration with the Charity Commission.

Members of the Parochial Church Council in 2023.

Priest in Charge: The Rev'd Canon Angela Whittaker.
Chair of the PCC,
Chair of Ministry, Mission and Outreach Committee
Member of the Diocesan Synod.

Assistant Priest: The Rev'd Marion Mashiter

Churchwardens: David Walker: Local Lay Minister.
Member of the Diocesan Synod.
Chair of the Eco Sub-committee.
Roy Watkinson: Parish Safeguarding Officer.
Chair of the Fabric Committee.

Deanery Synod Members: Graham Day Lay Reader (Foundation Governor until Sept.)
Marion Mashiter
David Walker
Angela Whittaker

Elected PCC Members John Chandler Chair of Health and Safety Sub-committee
Elspeth Jayne PCC Secretary
Collin Mansfield Chair of the Fun and Fundraising Committee
Nigel Mitchell Chair of the Finance Committee

Casual Vacancy Member Barbara Nelson Stewardship Secretary

Coopted Member Martin Jayne Retired Priest

Treasurer and Observer: Hilda Walker

Electoral Roll Officer: Pamela Mansfield

Structure, Governance and Management.

The PCC consists of elected and ex-officio members. Additionally, we have members filling a casual vacancy, who were co-opted, or who are attending in an observer capacity. Most of the detailed work required to maintain our aims, purposes, objectives and activities is carried out by committees who report back to the PCC. The PCC receives reports from the Finance, Fabric, and Fun and Fundraising Committees at each of its two-monthly meetings and from The Reverend Canon Angela Whittaker, our Priest in Charge, on Mission, Ministry and Outreach, Children and Young People and 'Further Afield.' Our Parish Safeguarding Officer, Roy Watkinson, presents a paper at each meeting on safeguarding issues.

Aims and Purposes.

St. Mark's PCC has the responsibility of cooperating with the Priest in Charge in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

Objectives and Activities.

The PCC is committed to encouraging and enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our community.

Electoral Roll Report 2024

The Electoral Roll Officer, Pamela Mansfield reports that there are 99 parishioners on the Electoral Roll. 77 are resident in the Parish and 22 are not resident within the Parish. 7 new members have joined.

Any members of the congregation, not already on the roll are invited to enrol at the end of the Annual Church Meeting when the Roll reopens.

Pamela A Mansfield, Electoral Roll Officer

Church Figures.

In 2023, we were delighted to welcome 134 people to worship on Easter Eve/Day, of whom 81 also received Holy Communion. During Advent, i.e. from Advent Sunday to 23rd December, 204 people attended special services for the congregation and local community, in addition to 350+ who attended special services held for our local schools and nursery. On Christmas Eve and/or Christmas Day 111 people received Holy Communion and 424 attended worship. During 2023 there were 9 baptisms, 5 weddings, 5 funerals in church, 3 funerals at the crematorium, and 4 burials of ashes. Average Sunday attendance in 2023 was 56 people (including 3 children) and average Thursday attendance 16 people. In addition, an average of 24 people attended the fortnightly services at Kendal Care Home, an average of 16 attended F@4 and an average of 15 attended Compline.

Report of the PCC.

January 2023 saw the Parochial Church Council rejoicing in some things and regretting some others. As a result of legacies from Edward Lawton and Stan O'Connor the new red carpet was in place, and the sound system had been improved. It was good to be reminded of these old friends and of their generosity. We heard from Roy Watkinson, our Safeguarding Officer that all the members of the congregation who were involved in church work had filled in the necessary forms with equanimity. At the same meeting we heard with regret that despite the generosity of Natland Parish Council in funding the cutting of grass in the churchyard for some years, they have now found that they are restricted by law and shouldn't financially assist religious institutions.

Most of the decisions that have to be taken by the PCC are prepared and proposed by the four committees and their reports can be read elsewhere in this report. The PCC aims to meet every two months, where they approve (usually) the proposals by the committees and look at anything that has arisen that isn't covered by any of them.

In March we learned that there had been a big post-Covid surge in the requests for baptisms and weddings, which was good to hear. The arch over the front gate was giving us some concern as it doesn't like being cut back, yet to let it continue to grow would also cause problems. This is an issue still to be resolved.

We lost our dear friends Joan Stables, Hilary Kilby and Anne Calvert in 2022, and their absence from our congregation continues to be felt. We agreed to establish a Benefactors Fund to preserve our memories of them and to ensure that their legacies are used in ways that are appropriate to their memory.

We had another little meeting after the Annual Meeting in April. The officers were all happy to continue in their posts and we were grateful to Christopher Townsend who was happy to continue as our independent examiner. Barbara Nelson was swiftly recruited back onto the PCC in the space left by a Casual Vacancy. The experience she can give us after her many years as a member of the PCC is greatly appreciated.

In May we had weighty matters to consider. The Diocese had proposed that Crosscrake should be added to the existing Benefice of Old and New Hutton and Natland. We realised that this would add to Angela's workload, and we would still be paying the same Parish Share with increases year on year. However, we agreed unanimously to these proposals, but expressed our concern that it would be too much work for Angela. Our agreement was accepted although the accompanying understanding that Angela should be re-named Vicar rather than Priest-in-Charge has yet to come to pass and the Benefice is not yet agreed.

The acquisition of the new Vicarage and the disposal of the existing one was also on the agenda in May. We were pleased to strongly support unanimously the proposals by the Diocese, especially the proposal that the new Vicarage would be made energy efficient. To see Angela, Andrew and Micah comfortably installed is a real achievement by the Diocesan Officers, who are currently working on the disposal of the old Vicarage.

Roy managed to forestall a suggestion by the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer that more requirements on the filling in of safeguarding forms would be asked of our congregation. The requirement may recur in 2026. Our Parish is renowned throughout the diocese as being reliable, accurate and up to date in the fulfilment of safeguarding requirements, thanks to Roy's skilful guidance.

After the late spring flurry of excitement, we didn't meet again until September. We remembered The Rev'd Canon Colin Stannard in our prayers on this occasion, and the years he spent as Priest of this Parish. We were then pleased to unanimously and enthusiastically support the proposal by Angela that The Rev'd Marion Mashiter be licensed by the Bishop to continue her ministry with us.

Our last PCC of the year saw us considering the D Day 80th anniversary commemorations and John Chandler offered to do a display on the topic in May in the church. Angela presented us with a raft of Mission, Ministry and Outreach activities which she proposed and which we were pleased to accept. Efforts by David Walker to encourage us to become more environmentally friendly will soon result in an energy audit. Over the winter we have been meeting on a Thursday afternoon when the building is warm anyway in an attempt to reduce our carbon footprint but will be reverting to Wednesday evenings over the warmer months. *Elsbeth Jayne, PCC secretary.*

Mission, Ministry & Outreach Report.

Mission, Ministry and Outreach are at the heart of who we are as God's church in our local community and when they aren't it's time to pause, pray and re-assess. Through the course of the year, as a PCC, we have endeavoured to provide regular ministry and worship on Sundays and Thursdays in addition to other seasonal worship - regularly gathering around the Lord's table to share in Holy Communion but also other services where we gather principally around God's Word.

In a typical month we celebrate Holy Communion on at least three Sundays at 10am (and once a month at 8am) and each Thursday. In addition, Families@4 worships monthly at 4pm(!) on the 2nd Sunday of the month and Encounter at 7pm on the 3rd Sunday of the month - both being a place for a less traditional way of worshipping - and where it's quite common to have lots of congregation participation, lively conversation, and food.

Compline in Lent and Advent is a timely pause for reflection in what can be very busy seasons. The occasional offices (baptisms, weddings, and funerals) though keeping us busy are not as frequent as they used to be. A flourishing ministry is our ministry in Kendal Care Home where we worship fortnightly and Home Communions (with several members of our church family now receiving Holy Communion at home on a regular basis).

We have not managed to livestream worship in recent years, though the Sunday 10am liturgy is sent out each week to those on the St Mark's 'Catch up' list wanting to worship 'with us' at home or away.

On a weekly basis we lead worship in St Mark's CE School - 'we' currently being Charlie Day our ordinand and/or Angela, and on another day of the week a parent from school (and member of Parr Street congregation) leads Key Stage 2 Worship which the children thoroughly enjoy. This academic year it has been exciting to recruit and facilitate a Collective Worship Team at school (two children from each class except for Reception Class) who are responsible for planning and delivering school worship in church on a regular basis - they have some super ideas and take their responsibilities very seriously. It is also good to welcome St Mark's Nursery School staff, children, and their families to worship in church on a termly basis and the Appletree family too.

A committed team of governors, including the Foundation Governors nominated by us, support ministry to school, and this past year have been particularly busy with an OFSTED inspection, the retirement of Peter Barfoot as headteacher, and the appointment of Louise Hinton as new headteacher in addition to the other governance responsibilities in and for school.

Sunday School and Study Groups are also important aspects of our ministry too as a church, as is our work towards becoming carbon neutral and caring more for God's good creation.

Regarding mission and outreach this year, in addition to continuing with existing groups and activities such as Mothers' Union Families Group, Walk & Talk, Families@4, Sunday School, Vestry Coffee Mornings, Lent Lunches, Warm Space (early 2023), Carol Singing, supporting CAP (Christians Against Poverty), Christian Aid, TWAM (Tools With A Mission), the Food Bank, Manna House and more, we have had some special one-off events such as the community Coronation Celebration on the Village Green (and many other events reported in the FunCom report). We have also become a space for CAMEO (Come And Meet Each Other), the source for a team of volunteers helping at Mini Marks (a new toddler group meeting in St Mark's CE School Hall each Monday morning) and a support to the Helm Mission Community Eco Prayer & Action Group and the Salvation Army Toy Appeal.

This is quite a lot of activity (or better described Mission, Ministry and Outreach), involving lots of people in different ways, but we are mindful as a PCC that there is still so much more we could do. Our challenges include: how to reach out to children, young people and families in a meaningful way so that they discover God's love for them and in turn our congregation might grow more diverse, as well as numerically and spiritually; how we welcome new friends and neighbours, as our parish population changes and in some places grows through new housing, for example at Castlesteads, and in the coming weeks and months on Helmdale; and how we provide good pastoral care to each other and all who would appreciate it. Regarding work with children and young people the diocese has given the deanery enough funding to employ a Network Youth Worker whose role will be to encourage work with children and young people and train and encourage local congregations to lead this work in their communities. We look forward to this appointment and to help, advice and encouragement in this important area of ministry.

Angela Whittaker.

Report of the Fabric Committee.

SERVICING. All the necessary servicing, including boilers, fire extinguishers, burglar alarm system, tower clock, organ, lightning protection system, lawnmower and strimmer have been carried out, as required.

MAINTENANCE. Ongoing regular church cleaning, clearing of drains and gutters, gravestone stability monitoring, grass cutting, cutting back the brambles and hedge trimming etc have all continued. Additional one-off repairs have been carried out as and when required, including trimming of the Irish Yews in the churchyard, re-fixing slipped roof tiles, repairing the vestry door, fixing the loose floor slab in the main aisle, re-applying SmartWater security protection to our leadwork and historical/valuable metal items, repairing the WC, repairs to the tower clock and repairs to the main external noticeboard.

NEW CHURCH LIGHTING. This work has now all been completed, including spotlights for the altar, lectern and pulpit, improved background lighting for the underside of the roof and the fitting of dimmer switches.

QUINQUENNIAL INSPECTION REPORT. This 5-yearly report was last produced by our Architect in June 2021. We continue to make good progress in implementing the recommendations, including re-pointing ridge tiles on the nave roof, treating all external doors with wood oil, fixing the door at the top of the tower, repairs to the boiler room ceiling and replacing the lino in the vestry kitchen, WC and passageway (due late March), over the last year.

Thank you to everyone who has helped us with maintaining and looking after our beautiful church.

Roy Watkinson, Chair, Fabcom.

Health and Safety Report.

As with all public buildings St. Mark's Church is subject to current health and safety legislation. As a consequence, the Parochial Church Council is responsible for all matters pertaining to safety within the Church building and its confines. The PCC has delegated the day-to-day management of all health and safety issues to a designated committee of John Chandler, Nigel Mitchell, David Walker, Roy Watkinson and Angela Whittaker.

This Committee, on behalf of the PCC, therefore, seek to provide the assurance that all our worship takes place in a safe environment. Should you have concerns about health and safety in Church these are the members of the PCC to which your issue(s) should be addressed.

The Committee continually addresses the vast range of policies and procedures and where and when appropriate make changes and amendments. There have been two particular areas of concern in 2023, fire evacuation procedures and safe passage from the Church via the Helm Lane gate. The guidelines for the safe evacuation of the Church have and are being reviewed. Following a slight accident to a lady leaving by this gate considerable thought was

given to how potential accidents could be avoided. A double backed sign has been placed warning of the steps and asking for the gate to be closed after exiting. To assist those using the gate handrails have also been installed. The Committee will keep this situation under review.

The safety of graves is also regularly checked. We still await the outcome of the "Protect Duty" legislation which relates to all public buildings and their preparedness for terrorist attacks. The committee continually concern themselves with the progress of this legislation, or its lack. Despite our submission to the consultation and our belief that future legislation will not apply to us here at St. Mark's the situation has changed and eventually we will be part of the appropriate regulations.

John Chandler. Chair, H&S Committee.

Report of the Fun and Fundraising Committee.

Funcom by the end of 2023 was made up of Angela Whitaker, David Walker, Mike Trelogan, Marion Thornton, Christine Smith, Collin Mansfield, Megan Longworth, Jenny Kelly and Hilary Atkinson.

We were sad to see Elspeth leave us but thanked her for all her hard work and were happy to receive her assurance that she was still available to help when needed and, in particular, to continue organising the Christian Aid collection and Coffee Morning. We welcomed Megan as a new member of the team.

The year got off to a good start with the Candlemas electricity and, for the first time, gas sponsorship scheme. Over £2,000.00 was raised thanks to your generosity towards lighting and heating the church.

Coffee mornings were arranged most months supporting either the church or another nominated charity. A particularly well supported event was for drugs for Malawi supporting Gill Pilling in her work with that charity.

A new innovation "discovered" by David Walker was "Spud in a Bucket" The highlight of this event was watching the faces of some younger entrants discovering that there were potatoes growing beneath the green tops in their buckets and that they didn't grow in plastic bags on supermarket shelves!

We had a well-attended concert by the Lakes Gospel Choir who donated the income to church funds but next time we will ask for a little less amplification! K Shoes and Encore Opera were equally entertaining but sadly audience numbers were disappointing as they were for the Kendal Big Band later in the year. It seems some folks have lost the enthusiasm to venture out in the evening post Covid? Or are we just putting on the wrong sort of concert? Or, at the wrong time of day? All comments are always welcome.

Angela and Andrew hosted a very successful summer barbecue to give everyone their last chance to experience the "Old Vicarage" garden before their move to St Mark's Fold.

A successful jumble sale was organised at which we raised over £900.00. Thank you to all who helped and particularly to Marion for co-ordinating this event. Marion was also busy in the autumn with others organising the Harvest Supper.

The Christmas coffee morning was well supported and financially successful. Any ideas to build upon this success with this event will be gratefully received.

Throughout the year there were sales of plants and produce. Thank you to everyone who contributed stock or bought items, particularly Marion and the other jam makers for the seemingly endless supply of jams and preserves. Almost £1,900.00 was raised from sales of preserves and plants making this activity very important for church funds. Everyone is welcome to contribute to the items on sale as well as being encouraged to buy. Please label and price items and try and keep the porch area tidy whether buying or providing stock.

The sale of jigsaws in aid of the Air Ambulance and MNDA proved a popular feature again during the winter months. Thank you to Julie Hill for organising this.

During the year we received gifts of various items for "Cash in the attic". Thank you to Anna Marie for masterminding the E-Bay sales and for those who generously made donations. If you think you have anything suitable to donate, please speak with Collin.

The total of funds raised for church from Candlemas, preserves and plants and fundraising was just over our target at £9000.00. More accurate figures will be found in the church accounts. Thank you again to everyone who contributed in any way to this figure.

The PCC sets a target to raise 13% of "designated income" for charities which we were able to meet again. In cash terms this was over £5,500.00. The Palliative Care Trust Malawi and Christian Aid were the biggest recipients, but a variety of other charities were supported.

Our level of activity can only be sustained if we have a team of active volunteers and inspiration for practicable events. We are happy to welcome new recruits to the committee or ideas for future events. We start the year 2024 with some inspiration from those who took the time to complete the Questionnaire which was enclosed with the December magazine.

Collin Mansfield. Chair, Funcom

Eco Church Report.

At the end of 2022 we managed to achieve the bronze Eco church award, but we did not rest on our laurels.

When we completed the Carbon footprint for 2022 it did show that we had reduced our Carbon footprint but that it was still high. In fact, when the Diocese produced its plan to become Net Zero carbon by 2030, they listed the top twenty percent of churches which have the biggest carbon footprint, and Natland was on the list with both Crosscrake and Kendal Holy Trinity. Most of the churches that appeared were ones that have several services per week.

Throughout the year our Eco church subcommittee have reviewed what we do and have introduced things so we could work towards the silver Eco church award such as having wild flowers in the churchyard and introducing an area for communal Christmas Cards. A report was produced for the Diocese's newsletter, a copy of which is on the board by the jigsaws.

We have in the last few months met up with other churches in our Mission Community and formed a Helm Mission Community Environmental Prayer and Action Group which meets on the 4th Saturday of the month.

Due to the support of the congregation, we were able to apply for our silver award in November a year to the day that we applied for our bronze award. On the 23rd of November we were granted our silver award.

So, what does 2024 bring? We will be starting the process to go for our gold award, but as a subcommittee we are also tasked with producing a plan on how as a church we are going to get to Net Zero Carbon by 2030.

David Walker. Chair, Eco Church Committee.

Deanery Synod Report.

During 2023 there were three meetings for Deanery Synod and for each one there was a spotlight issue dealing with mission and ministry in our community settings.

Our first meeting, held on 9th March, was led by Bishop Rob and this was his first visit as Bishop of Penrith. The theme of his presentation was "Tending the Mission Community Garden - hopefulness and realism". He emphasised that "God for all" is about hope and restoration for communities for all, because of what God has done in Jesus Christ. He introduced the idea that the church is called to faithful improvisation, in that she holds fast to the core "love song of God" for the people of the world, but at the same time improvising around that for our own day and place.

The metaphor of a garden was the centre of this theme of faithful improvisation. A garden changes through the seasons. It is about growth and death; about planning and also chance; about direct intervention and also about standing back and letting things run their natural course. He suggested that using this garden metaphor points powerfully to what is required of Mission Communities.

He concluded with the plea that we are all to seek the Kingdom and listen to the Spirit; to discern the times and season; but also, that we should be open to letting go of the familiar and to take risks and embrace what is new, holding on to the underlying truth of the Gospel.

On 17th July Deanery Synod met at St. Andrew's Church, Sedbergh, and considered what the challenges and opportunities of Mission and Ministry are in smaller rural communities. Led by Revd Les Hann, he began by pointing out that it is easy to think about the things that the congregations of small churches cannot do and how hard it can be for them instead of thinking about what they can do and to be creative as they adapt to the situations they find themselves in. He identified these congregations as the "packaging" that God comes in for

our local communities. Small churches are in an ideal position to be "second commandment churches" that ooze love for their neighbour as part of their love for God. But that we should not expect the community to come to us and join us where we are. It is more a case of us meeting them where they are. Life in small rural churches does have its problems and difficulties, but there is as well the opportunity to become the packaging in which the love of God can be seen at work in our communities.

Our final meeting of the year, held at Skelsmergh Community Hall was led by Revd Canon Tricia Rogers, Diocesan Disability Advisor. Her observation was that as churches we tend to be reactive to events rather than proactive so that everyone may be included in everything that we do - God for All. She talked about the Equalities Act 2010 and the types of discrimination that it covers. In the light of this churches have a responsibility to make sure as far as reasonably possible that their buildings and activities are accessible to everyone. Through a series of slides she highlighted how churches should be addressing the different types of disabilities.

This year's Deanery Ascension Day service was held at St Oswald's, Burneside. A wonderful opportunity to worship together.

Graham Day. Deanery Synod Representative.

Report from the Churchwardens.

The annual inspection for the Church Property Register (previously known as the Terrier and Inventory) was undertaken by David Walker and Roy Watkinson on 8th February 2024. We are pleased to report that all of the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church are in their place and are in good condition, other than:

- our white, metal A-board is broken (will require replacing)
- we have one flag now for the flagpole on the tower (previously 3, two are worn out)
- we have found 2 additional altar frontals.

We confirm that we maintain a Log Book and this is kept up to date.

We confirm that the Church Property Register and Log Book are accurate to the best of our ability and knowledge. These two documents are kept in the Church Safe and are available for inspection at any time, on request.

David Walker and Roy Watkinson

Safeguarding Report.

Thank you to everyone who volunteers at St Mark's Church, your help is essential and so highly appreciated.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

1) Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding arrangements are in place with our Safeguarding Policy clearly displayed on our noticeboard and details on our website. This policy directly follows the Church of

England's recommended wording, as agreed by the House of Bishops. This policy is presented to the PCC annually and was last approved by our PCC on 14/03/2024. The PCC has complied with its duty under Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, regarding the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

2) Associated Policies and Statements

The PCC have approved other policies and statements, some required by the Church of England and others by the Charity Commission. These associated policies include:

- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Responding to a Safeguarding Concern or Allegation Statement
- Policy for the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders
- Code of Conduct for our Charity
- A Risk Register
- Preventing Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Whistle Blowing Policy

All these policies are reviewed by the PCC annually and they were last approved by our PCC on 14/03/2024.

3) Safer Recruitment

We have made great progress in implementing the Safer Recruitment process for our volunteers, with letters, role descriptions, registration forms, confidential declarations, references, DBS checks and appointment letters (all as required depending on the roles involved). We are blessed with over 60 volunteers at St Mark's and documentation is up to date and complete with everyone (apart from appointment letters for 5 people - mainly new volunteers awaiting training).

4) Safeguarding Training

Likewise, great progress has been made in volunteers undertaking safeguarding training, with most training completed (over 80 modules). At the time of writing, 5 volunteers are awaiting a face-to-face training session on the joint Basic Awareness/Foundation module.

5) Safeguarding Dashboards

St Mark's Church, Natland was asked by Carlisle Diocese if we would join a pilot in using the Church of England's Safeguarding Dashboards. We were happy to support the diocese in this way and have made good progress in working our way through and completing these. One output from these Dashboards is an automated Safeguarding Action Plan, which plots our progress in complying with Church of England arrangements for safeguarding. This Action Plan is regularly reviewed by the PCC. These Dashboards are now being rolled out across the Diocese.

6) Miscellaneous

- We also display a copy of the Church of England's 'Promoting a Safer Church' poster with the appropriate contact details and the Parish Safeguarding Handbook, plus posters

from Safe Spaces (support for victims of abuse), the Samaritans, HM Govt on domestic abuse (You Are Not Alone), Childline and Christians Against Poverty (debt help).

- If you would like to start to volunteer and help us in any role, or add to the roles you already do now, do please speak to Angela or a Churchwarden.

- Thank you again to all our volunteers for helping to make our church such a safe and special place.

Roy Watkinson. Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Additional Reports

Cameo

In April of 1923 a group of villagers met in church to discuss the possibility of starting a social club where people could come together to enjoy each other's company and maybe learn something new as well.

After a short discussion it was decided that we would meet every third Sunday at 3pm in church but omitting December and August. We also thought that we should have a theme to give a focus to the meeting. It was suggested that this could include music, favourite books, art, interesting or unusual objects, indoor games etc. We gave the group a name, Cameo, (Come And Meet Each Other) which we agreed was suitable, as this expressed our feelings about one of the reasons for starting the group.

We have enjoyed some informative and interesting Sunday afternoons. We listened to some harp music and had the chance to try our hands at playing harps ourselves. We were introduced to members' favourite books and were intrigued by unusual objects. A fun rainy afternoon was had playing board games and another time listening to favourite records and hearing reasons for choices. These are just a sample of the meetings we have had so far.

Each time we finish with a warm drink and cake which members can volunteer to take charge of.

There is no leader of the group as such, and we encourage each other to offer to take charge of a session. We would be very happy for new people to join and enjoy the fellowship. No one is expected to join in with the discussions; just come along and listen and perhaps meet new friends.

We already have ideas for the next year and are planning a rough programme. Notices of future meetings will be in the Church Magazine.

Di Outhwaite.

Diocesan Synod.

The March meeting of the Synod had a wide range of topics ranging from a presentation by the Mothers Union to the work that the Bishop's Harvest Appeal funds. There was a presentation on the environment in which the Synod endorsed the Church of England's

national goal of becoming Carbon Neutral by 2030; and called on the Diocese to draw up a plan for the Diocese to become Net Zero Carbon. This was presented and agreed on at the October meeting. We will be working to produce a plan for this Parish to reduce our Carbon footprint.

Bishop James introduced an item on Social Care. He was involved in the House of Lords Select Committee on the future of Social Care and was also the Co-Chair of the Archbishop's Commission on Reimagining Care. He also described his visit on behalf of the Archdeacon to Brisbane to see how they deal with Social Care.

We also had reports on Safeguarding, Archdeacons' review and received a paper setting out a proposed vision, strategy, policy and action plan for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) within the Diocese. This policy was passed during the June meeting.

The June meeting was the last for Bishop James before his retirement and it was held at Rose Castle, the old home of the Bishop of Carlisle. After a tour of the building Bishop James reflected on his twenty years in the Diocese.

In the October meeting we were given a presentation from Bishop Rob on a bid we are making as a diocese for a grant from the Diocesan Investment Programme. If successful, this grant will enable us to strengthen Mission Communities across the diocese. How? By paying for a third Archdeacon for the next five years and for three development officers who will work in the archdeaconries focusing on helping Mission Communities to work through some of the obstacles they face.

We had a presentation on Affordable Housing with contributions from Tim Farron MP, our very own Deanery Secretary Peter Clarke on behalf of Mitre Housing, Bill Bewley from the Keswick Housing Trust, and Beki Winter from Housing Justice. We were reminded of the problems faced in our county due to the high number of second homes/short term lets rather than long term lets. There is a lot of competition for houses which forces the rent up - and there is a knock-on effect for our communities including local schools.

David Walker, Diocesan Synod representative.

Families@4

Families@4 is an opportunity for young families to experience worship in a relaxed style. Each month on the second Sunday there is a planned theme which includes craft activities, music, singing and listening to or acting out a Bible story. Even the refreshments are linked into the theme - biscuits in all shapes!

The year began by dressing up and following the star for Epiphany. At Easter time there was an egg hunt and in the Summer we looked at nature in the Churchyard. We finished the Summer with a garden party and outdoor games.

In the Autumn the theme was The Parables including The Parable of The Talents and The Parable of the Good Samaritan which was acted out. Christmas was celebrated by acting out The Christmas Story.

The Families@4 congregation is a small group of parents and children who enjoy the informal atmosphere. Invites are sent out each month via e-mail and also via the school. Our challenge continues to be our hope that more families from the community will join us.

Elizabeth Chandler.

Helm Mission Community

St Mark's Church is part of the Helm Mission Community (formerly known as the Helm Group of Churches). In the Helm Mission Community, there are seven churches (the five Anglican Churches of Natland, Old Hutton, New Hutton, Crosscrake and Holy Trinity Kendal and The Salvation Army Kendal and Kendal United Reformed Church), who have promised to work together and support each other especially regarding mission. Across our diocese and county there are many other Mission Communities trying to do the same thing - some of which are more advanced in this than we are and some who aren't yet.

Mission is a key word in the title because we've joined together not just because it's good to work with others or because churches are being encouraged to merge (the latter is not the case in fact) but because our primary focus is to try and work out what we can do together in mission.

Highlights in 2023 included:

- a service in January 2023 at the Salvation Army Hall with lunch afterwards and 5th Sunday worship across the rural churches of the Mission Community
- Mission Community Lent Groups which met on zoom and in person
- celebrating the priesting of The Rev'd Rob McLellan as a curate in the Helm Mission Community. Rob is based at Holy Trinity Kendal Parish Church though serves as a Foundation Governor at Old Hutton CE School
- continuing to work with Charlie Day as an ordinand on placement with us until May 2024
- singing Christmas carols outside 106 Highgate (in the rain!) and joining forces with our fellow congregations for Carol Singing at Oxenholme Station - this year with stringed accompaniment from Kevin Huggett the new Outreach Worker at Kendal United Reformed Church
- Holy Trinity Kendal Parish Church and the Salvation Army working together on a Wellbeing Café called Connect Cafe
- being part of the Toy Appeal at the Salvation Army
- ecumenical friends joining us regularly for Walk & Talk
- Eco Prayer & Action Group facilitated by The Rev'd Lucy Foster and hosted by the various church and communities in our Mission Community
- an Away Day in November where members of all our churches were invited to come together for the day to find out more about each other's communities, discern what gaps there are in our work and determine what we could do better together.

As part of the Helm Mission Community, we have been making our contribution to the work and conversations of the Kendal Mission Area which includes the Methodist Churches across Kendal and most of the other churches too. Watch out for more in 2024 ...

Angela Whittaker

Mothers' Union Families Group.

Once again, we have had a very busy and enjoyable year at MU Families Group. We have increased in numbers again and have lively and friendly meetings.

In January we went out for our usual after Christmas meal at Crooklands - it snowed but not enough to put us off going.

In February, two representatives came along to tell us about the new innovations which Sight Advice can provide and also demonstrated how short-sightedness and eventually blindness can affect us all. It was a very interesting evening with lots of information for us all as we get older.

In March, Cherrie Trelogan took us on a pictorial walk 'From Brigflatts to Fox's Pulpit' which is one of the 'Arts for Walks' series. We enjoyed some beautiful scenery and attention to details, ie. flowers and trees in bloom. It was a very restful evening.

In April, Nicky Smith came to talk to us about community during and after Covid. This was different from her usual evenings of making or doing things. She spoke about getting people together to play musical instruments outside during Covid and also getting folk together after Covid to prevent isolation.

In May, one of our own members, Hazel Carter, showed slides with the background of the Magnificat but pointing out that many many people all over the world are so much in need of our help.

In June, we again enjoyed a meal out at Crooklands.

After our summer break, in September, Joe Murray came again to tell us about community projects, particularly how to deter random burglaries and home break-ins. He handed out leaflets and stickers for windows to show if we have burglar alarms and video doorbells, all of which deter burglars.

In October, our vicar, Angela, brought a quiz for us to do in teams which, as usual when Angela speaks to us, involved much thought and also laughter.

In November, Jenny Parker brought an array of amazing lace and gave us a potted history of the art which was really interesting.

In December, thankfully our own Barbara showed us the Christmas Wreath, how it is made and what all the separate parts are. She interspersed her talk with beautiful music, and we had a lovely pre-Christmas evening of calm. We also had a 70th birthday cake and candles for Marion to blow out as we knew we wouldn't be seeing her before the date in January.

We would be very happy for anyone interested to have a look at the programme for 2024 and come and join us.

Margaret Bateman, secretary.

One to Five Baptism Cards

The One to Five Baptism Cards Scheme continues and provides a link with young families and for them to be remembered by St. Marks Church. Where possible the anniversary cards are presented as part of the Families@4 Service or hand delivered. Presently there are 27 children in the scheme at St. Mark's Church, an increase reflecting the return to normal after the pandemic. There were 9 baptisms in 2023. So far in 2024 there has been one baptism. Our challenge continues to be a hope that more of the families presenting for baptism will be involved in the Families@4 Service.

Elizabeth Chandler.

St. Mark's CofE Primary School

Do you wonder what is it like to be a member of St Mark's CE Primary School Natland?

I can report that it is lively, friendly, exciting, and nurturing, as a Christian community should be. The school year rolls on, in time-honoured fashion. Children come and go, usually after seven years of learning and growing. Adults come and go too, so our farewell to Pete Barfoot last spring was especially poignant, after 16 years as Headteacher at St Mark's. Now there's a new Head, Louise Hinton, who has taken up the reins with great enthusiasm and skill, casting fresh eyes on the opportunities and challenges faced by all who work in any school, especially ours. Saying 'goodbye' is always hard, especially to cherished members of staff, so it was a sad day when Mrs Thorne left this term. Miss Huddleston has joined the team, as Year 1 teacher and made to feel very welcome from the start. As well as being a teacher, she is a riding instructor for the Pony Club.

The PTA has continued to work tirelessly to support the school, raising money (over £6,000 in one term, for instance) by organising discos, film nights, raffles and other events. Money has been spent on much needed resources for children at all ages in school and nursery, including changing facilities for the nursery, reading books, wellie racks and some funds for each class. Blackout curtains for the school hall have been funded by the Baldukie Trust.

Visitors to school have included Cumbria Police, to talk about safety, online and offline (out and about). Tim Farron, our MP, visited, to be quizzed by the School Council. Postman Andy came to talk to Reception. Sessions on Bikeability for older children and Peddle and Scoot for younger ones have been attended enthusiastically. Tennis coaching has been offered, also Kwik Cricket and tag rugby. Kent Estuary Young Farmers have done a great job of tidying the Hidden Haven.

School visits and trips included a residential week at Hawse End for Year 6. Our Young Voices performed at the Manchester Arena, as part of the largest school choir in the world. Year 6 children have been on leadership course, through Panathlon, which trains them to support competitors with special needs and disabilities, plus to help with rules and scoring. Competitive sporting events have included lacrosse, orienteering, fell running, cross country, plus netball and football tournaments.

There is a new playgroup, called Mini Mark's, for babies and toddlers, on Mondays in the school hall, a great initiative to include the youngest in our community.

The Governing Body has continued to meet regularly, with some new faces there, as well. We welcome new people who are interested to support the school with whatever skills and talents they have to offer.

The very full life of the school is available on the internet:

stmarksschoolnatland.co.uk

facebook.com/StMarksSchoolNatland

Please do look to see how everyone is engaged enthusiastically in this vibrant school.

Mary Cammack. Foundation Governor.

Study Group

During 2023 we have been able to meet in person, both at The (now former) Vicarage and also at Graham and Penny Day's home. We meet on a Tuesday evening, usually fortnightly, following a Study Course from a book or a home-grown course. We read the Bible together, find the answers to questions together and invariably ask questions too. We also pray and share refreshments together. In essence we're helping and supporting each other as we endeavour to 'Follow Daily.' In 2023 themes included 'Prayers In the Bible', the Epiphany Gospels and a series on the Trinity. There are also other groups across the Mission Community meeting at different times/days and there is always the option to join one of them.

Angela Whittaker

Singing Group

We don't have a Church Choir at the moment. However, a small group of people who enjoy singing, sit in the choir stalls and lead the congregational singing, for which we are very grateful.

At Christmas we gather a small community choir together for our Carol Service.

Clive and Gill would welcome more volunteers to join our group of dedicated Sunday singers.

Gill Walkley.

Sunday School & Creche

We do not attract large numbers of children to our Sunday School (except now and then) but there is a week-by-week commitment to seeing our children and young people grow in their faith through Bible stories and relevant activities. The children in Sunday School follow the same gospel reading as we do in the church service, even when it is a challenging read! There are always puzzles to complete, conversation to be had and often a craft or game too.

Alongside Sunday School we make provision for younger accompanied children to attend creche which runs at the same time as Sunday School. Invariably some of the children in creche enjoy the Sunday School story and activities too!

Thank you to Andrew Whittaker for preparing activities each week. We are always looking for new members to join the team of helpers. Please speak to one of the Clergy Team if you would like to find out more about being part of this very important ministry.

Angela Whittaker

Vestry Coffee Mornings

At some point every month a Coffee Morning is organised, usually on a Thursday after the Communion Service and usually in the Vestry although we hold it in the Church if a lot of people are expected. We often have tables with a selection of things for sale, and a raffle. The money raised is used for church funds, or people who have a charity which is dear to their hearts are welcome to hold an event. There is a willing team of helpers who will set it up and man it. This year we have sold Fairtrade goods from the Oxfam shop, and we've raised money to support Christian Aid, the Palliative Care Support Trust in Malawi and the Christian environmental charity A Rocha.

Thank you to everyone who came along and supported these events so generously.

Elsbeth Jayne.

Walk & Talk

On the first Tuesday of every month, we meet at the Post Box on the Village Green in readiness for a walk at 10.30am. The route is chosen based on the weather conditions and the energy and enthusiasm of the walkers present! Our focus is not fast paced or long distance but good conversations with each other. We are always back by 12 noon and sometimes earlier. During Lent we walk every Tuesday and stop for a brief seasonal reflection along the way. All are very welcome. Dogs are welcome too.

Angela Whittaker.

Worship at Kendal Care Home

Since the home opened in our parish, we have been invited in to lead and to share in worship with residents, staff and visitors, except for a period during the pandemic when access to

the home was severely restricted. As soon as we could we re-started, very small and simple, visiting each floor separately. Now we have returned to our usual way of worshipping in the lounge on the residential suite where there is a grand piano of all things!

When we first began, we developed a pattern of worship on the 1st and 3rd weeks (or the 2nd and 4th) which was all fine until we had a five-week month then everything seemed to flounder. By request we now hold a fortnightly service, led, and facilitated by a small team of volunteers, and also, by request, go up to the other floors in the home and visit residents who are unable to attend the service, taking Holy Communion to them or a reading and prayers.

Please pray for all at Kendal Care Home - those who make their home there, those who come for respite care, the families and all the staff. Pray too for the team who go in to share in the services - 'Songs & Readings' and 'Home Communion' - that we'll have just the right word to say in our conversations and be channels of God's loving care. If you would like to come and join us, please just say. The welcome we get is wonderful - and blessing is given and received.

And finally, thank you to the Team who faithfully and joyfully minister.
Angela Whittaker