

Stranton and Burbank Community

SIGNPOST



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

November 2025

All Saints... (The musings of a priest)

As we approach All Saints Day this year, and the launch of a year of events and activities to celebrate the 900th year of Stranton Church, I thought I'd reflect a little on the feast of All Saints.

'Exciting Holiness' says this: *From its earliest days, the Church has recognised as its foundation stones those heroes of the faith whose lives have excited others to holiness and have assumed a communion with the Church on earth and the Church in heaven.*

Celebrating the feast of All Saints' began in the fourth century. At first, it was observed on the Sunday after the feast of Pentecost; this was to link the disciples who received the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the 'foundation of the Church, with those who were martyrs, giving their lives as witnesses for the faith. In the eighth century, a pope dedicated a chapel to All Saints in St Peter's at Rome on 1st November. Within a century, this day was observed in England and Ireland as All Saints' Day.

The vast majority of the ~16,139 churches (as of 2016) in the Church of England are dedicated to one or more Saints, with others being dedicated to one of the persons of God, such as Holy Trinity, Christ Church, or Emmanuel. Of those dedicated to Saints, 1425 are dedicated to All Saints (surpassed only by those dedicated to St Mary with 1516). Out of interest, I also found that St Luke comes in at 17th with 242 churches dedicated to him, St Aidan is 49th (53), and St Columba 64th (24). With St Aidan and St Columba (along with Oswald, Cuthbert, Bede, Chad, Hilda and others), being Northern Saints, it stands to reason that the vast majority of churches dedicated to these saints are in the Northern Province of York. While dedications to Mary, All Saints, Luke, Peter, Paul and others are much more widespread – along with Holy Trinity and Christ Church.

The feast of All Saints began as a celebration of all those disciples who had had been martyred for their faith, from the Holy Innocents, killed by Herod (see Matthew 2:16-18), and John the Baptist, to Stephen (the protomartyr or first Christian Martyr), many of the apostles, through to Alban, Ignatius of Antioch, into the middle ages with Oswald, Thomas Becket, Joan of Arc, and many others. There are so many names we would recognise on a list of Christian martyrs – Thomas More, John Fisher, William Tyndale, Lady Jane Grey, Thomas Cranmer, Nicholas Ridley and more. In more recent times, Maximillian Kolbe, Edith Stein, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Oscar Romero. And still, all around the world, our Christian brothers and sisters are being martyred for their faith.

It's them we remember when we celebrate All Saints Day, all who have dedicated themselves faithfully to the Christian way of life. Not all have been canonised (e.g. Bonhoeffer), but neither does that negate the impact of their Christian lives, or that we might acknowledge them as significant figures in our Christian faith, whether that's at All Saints, or at other points in the year.

These people represent the legacy of the church, and for 900 years, the church has had a presence in Stranton, leaving it's own legacy in our town, alongside the many people who have served and worshipped there over the centuries. So join us this year as we celebrate this significant milestone, with a series of events between All Saints Day 2025 and 2026.

Grace and peace, Revd John

From the Home Front

From All Saints Day 2025 to All Saints Day 2026 is a momentous year in the long life of All Saint's Church Stranton – it is our 900th Anniversary Celebration. We are not sure exactly what year Guisborough Priory gifted the land and when the first church was built at Stranton – hence the choice of this year mid the possible dates.

Being part of the 900th Anniversary Team tasked with organising a wide variety of events and commemorations set me to thinking about my relationship and life within All Saints Church in Stranton Parish...

I was born and brought up within the Parish in Wansbeck Gardens. I have early memories of watching from our attic windows as the Boys Brigade marched behind their bugles and drums from St Matthew's Church Hall to Stranton for Church Parade. I was taken to services in Stranton from a young age by my Auntie, who was also my godmother and who had married in Stranton in April 1946 at the end of World War Two. I attended Sunday School in St Matthew's Church Hall and recall the little book in which we put our attendance picture stamps, and singing as Alf Peacock played the piano. I recall being an angel (my parents were astounded at the casting!) and standing in front of the pulpit during the nativity performance. I recall the font residing at the back of the church near the entrance door.

When only seven I recall my eldest brother marrying at Stranton, with my next oldest brother as best man and my sister as bridesmaid. As an adult I remember hearing our marriage banns being read and our wedding there in the late Queen's Silver Jubilee Year. At that time the church doors were on the inside of the porch meaning the porch was not enclosed as it is now.

I remember returning to Stranton in 1990 with my husband and three children under five - jobless and homeless, living back with my parents after leaving Hampshire, our home for 13 years. The first time I walked through the church door I felt we had come home! We met new friends, who have been there throughout our lives back in Hartlepool. Their children went to school with our children, we went on church holidays together, the children went to Christian camps together. We have supported each other with love, and practically, over the years, during the good and the tough times. They helped us grow in our faith and to live in the faith of a loving God and a Son who promises Eternal Life. I discovered the Holy Spirit and learnt of the gifts of the Spirit. We have sung, performed dramas, lead readings and prayers over many years.

I watched our girls being confirmed through Stranton, then thrive in YF and Burbank Community Church, before going on to marry in Stranton too. Then three of our grandsons being baptised in Burbank Community Church and Stranton. I organised my parent's funerals there and saw them into eternity. It continues to be central to our lives in so many ways.

What has it meant to you and your family? Do you feel connected through births, marriages, deaths, uniformed organisations, bellringing, youth groups? Please let us know and more importantly help us to celebrate God's House here in our Community and God's loving involvement in your lives...

J.A.R.

The Rt Revd Sarah Mullally to become 106th Archbishop of Canterbury



His Majesty The King has approved the nomination of the Bishop of London, the Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally, as the next Archbishop of Canterbury, Downing Street has announced.

The 106th Archbishop of Canterbury since Saint Augustine arrived in Kent from Rome in 597, Bishop Sarah will be the first woman to hold the office. She will be installed in a service at Canterbury Cathedral in March 2026.

Sarah Mullally has been the Bishop of London since 2018, the first woman appointed to that role, and before that was Bishop of Crediton in the Diocese of Exeter. Prior to her ordination in 2001, she was the Government's Chief Nursing Officer for England – the youngest person ever to be appointed to that role at the age of 37 – having previously specialised as a cancer nurse. Bishop Sarah has described nursing as "an opportunity to reflect the love of God".

The Crown Nominations Commission (CNC) for Canterbury nominated Bishop Sarah following a process of public consultation and prayerful discernment that began in February this year. The Canterbury CNC was made up of representatives from across the Church of England, global Anglican Communion and the Diocese of Canterbury.

The most senior bishop in the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury's ministry combines many roles including serving as the Diocesan Bishop of the Diocese of Canterbury, Primate of All England and Metropolitan, as well as primus inter pares – or first among equals – of the Primates of the global Anglican Communion, which consists of around 85 million people, across 165 countries. In the House of Lords, the Archbishop of Canterbury is one of 26 bishops who comprise the Lords Spiritual.

Bishop Sarah said: "As I respond to the call of Christ to this new ministry, I do so in the same spirit of service to God and to others that has motivated me since I first came to faith as a teenager.

"At every stage of that journey, through my nursing career and Christian ministry, I have learned to listen deeply – to people and to God's gentle prompting – to seek to bring people together to find hope and healing.

"I want, very simply, to encourage the Church to continue to grow in confidence in the Gospel, to speak of the love that we find in Jesus Christ and for it to shape our actions.

“And I look forward to sharing this journey of faith with the millions of people serving God and their communities in parishes all over the country and across the global Anglican Communion.

“I know this is a huge responsibility, but I approach it with a sense of peace and trust in God to carry me as He always has.”

Currently known as the Archbishop of Canterbury-designate, Bishop Sarah will legally become the Archbishop of Canterbury at her Confirmation of Election at St Paul’s Cathedral in January 2026, with a service of installation taking place at Canterbury Cathedral in March.

Biography:

Born in Woking in 1962, Bishop Sarah became a Christian at the age of 16. Before being ordained, Bishop Sarah worked as a nurse in the National Health Service, which she has described as “an opportunity to reflect the love of God”.

She specialised as a cancer nurse and, at the age of 37, became the Government's Chief Nursing Officer for England, the youngest person ever to be appointed to the post. Bishop Sarah was made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in recognition of her outstanding contribution to nursing. She was ordained in 2001 and served her curacy in the Diocese of Southwark, initially as a self-supporting minister, before leaving her government post in 2004.

In 2012, she was installed as Canon Treasurer at Salisbury Cathedral and three years later took the role as Suffragan Bishop of Crediton in the Diocese of Exeter. On 12th May 2018, Bishop Sarah was installed as the 133rd Bishop of London at St Paul’s Cathedral, the first woman to hold the role. Bishop Sarah is married to Eamonn and they have two grown-up children, Liam and Grace.

Appointment process – key dates:

Following the announcement, the next stage of the appointment process is the Election by the College of Canons of Canterbury Cathedral, which will take place before Christmas.

On 28th January 2026, there will be a Confirmation of Election at St Paul’s Cathedral in London, at which Bishop Sarah will legally become the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In March there will be an Installation (sometimes referred to as an ‘enthronement’) at Canterbury Cathedral, which denotes and marks the start of the new Archbishop of Canterbury’s ministry.

A comment from the Rt Revd Sarah Clark, Acting Bishop of Durham:

“I welcome with great joy Bishop Sarah Mullally as the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury in what is both an exciting and historic appointment. In the Diocese of Durham, our prayers are with Bishop Sarah, her family and friends, as she prepares to embark on this significant journey. She will be leading the Church of England and the Anglican Communion at a time when we are facing many challenges, and when our society here and in the wider world is in need of peace and unity. Bishop Sarah’s appointment will bring renewed hope and encouragement to our Church. I am so grateful to God for the outcome of this long discernment of who is called to be the Archbishop of Canterbury for a time such as this.”

First published in full on: 3rd October 2025

Happy Birthday to you - All Saints Stranton!



We're very excited to launch a year of celebration this All Saints Day for the 900th anniversary of All Saints Stranton! We'd love you to all be a part of our celebrations!

There will be updates each month in Signpost from us as a team inviting you all, and your friends and neighbours, to activities and services taking place. There are music concerts, community fun afternoons and maybe even a tower abseil on the horizon!

It'll be great to find out more about your memories of our beautiful parish church! If you have any photographs of the church that can help with our forthcoming history exhibitions, maybe weddings or baptisms, feel free to chat to one of the team or email Revd Claire or Revd John.

On **Saturday 1st November**, celebrations will kick off with the joyous sound of a Quarter Peal rung by some of our regular bellringers, from 6pm. The church will be open and we'd love to welcome you to look around the church and enjoy a cuppa, cake and some chat, as you listen to the bells being rung. There may also be an opportunity to go up into the ringing room, once the ringing has finished.

On **Sunday 16th November**, we'll be launching an exciting new monthly evening praise service called '**Sundays at 6**' from 6-7pm. The service will include times of worship with contemporary music, opening up God's Word and prayer ministry. We look forward to welcoming guest preachers to support us in this new initiative.

On **Sunday 22nd November**, the Boys Brigade will be having their Christmas Fayre. Do look out for Trish's crafts which will be raising money for our 900th anniversary celebrations. A big thank you Trish for offering to give to us in this way!

If you'd like to find out more about what is being planned for the rest of our celebrations or would like to support us, please do get in touch. It will be lovely to hear from you!

We look forward to sharing more with you in next month's edition!

900th Anniversary Celebration Team

Revd Claire, Revd John, Jacqui Rogers, Diane Greenwood, Cheryl Mills, and Maureen Anderson.

Harvest Festival

Our Harvest Festival was held on Sunday 28th September. Members of the Sunday Congregations were treated to a “Bacon Butty” treat between the services. At 11:00 am the Brownies, Guides and Boys Brigade Paraded their Colours before and after the Service. Tyler Anderson from Boys Brigade read one of the Bible passages and the Boys Brigade performed two harvest pieces on the Boom Whackers.

A fitting thanks to God who provides for our needs. Thanks also to all those who decorated the church to make it so welcoming and festive for the families and members who attended. Thanks to everyone who donated food and money which went to support Hartlepool Food Bank.



Uniformed Organisations Colours were Paraded.



Tyler Anderson read the lesson



Boys Brigade played the Boom Whackers



Harvest Gifts & FairTrade display

Harvest Festival at Elwick Grange Care Home



🥕 Harvest Festival Afternoon 🥕

Thank you to everyone who supported and donated, we were overwhelmed with your generosity.

[All Saints Stranton Church](#) are the recipients of your kindness and it was lovely to share the service with Rev Claire.

This morning we put the finishing touches to the Harvest Display ready for the festival.



Central Hartlepool Group

One Family, Three Parishes,
Growing the Kingdom.

All Saints Church Stranton



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

13th October 2025

A copy of a letter sent to PCC members earlier this month.

Dear PCC members,

Alongside the Steering Group, the Area Dean, and members of the diocesan team, we have been reviewing the priorities for our Mission Project for the remaining 15 months of funding, with a view to making a tangible impact on our town. For some time, the project has been operating out of St Columba's, reaching out into a lot of different areas of our communities.

Since Patrick was appointed, with an aim of transforming the work of the project, we have found a clear need for revitalisation in the Rift House area of our town. Revd. Becky has been working with the diocesan church growth team on ideas for planting a new worshipping community into this area, building on the work that Patrick and Hayley have been doing in the Rift House Community.

We now have a clear way forward for bringing faith into the Rift House area, with measurable targets to aim for, which will show the ultimate success of the project in Hartlepool.

We think this is a fantastic opportunity for the Central Hartlepool Group to come together and share in the regeneration of a Christian presence within Rift House, with St Columba's as the worship centre at the heart of this community.

To enable this venture, a number of things will be changing. Some with immediate effect, others in the next few months.

1. With the focus being on regeneration in the Rift House area, Revd. Becky will be taking on the Clergy Lead/Clergy Facilitator role for the mission project, facilitating the day-to-day activities of the project. This will release Revd John from project responsibilities to focus on mission within St Luke's and Stranton.
2. To facilitate the focus on Rift House, Hayley will be withdrawing from some of her current project activities across the group, but will be

maintaining links with our local schools through continuing support to assemblies and church visits. There is a possible opportunity for St Luke's and Stranton to keep some of the additional links going (e.g. Lunch clubs) if they want to take this on. Revd John is exploring this as an option.

3. With Revd. Becky taking on more of the project responsibilities and focussing on a church plant in Rift House out of St Columba's, we will be releasing her from the 9am Sunday service at Stranton to concentrate on St Aidan's and St Columba's. Revd John will work with the church wardens to revise the service pattern across the two parishes. This creates the added opportunity for sermon series to be rolled out a little easier across two parishes and not three, and will also free up St Aidan's administrator from coordinating the rota for the whole group. Revd. Becky's last Sunday at Stranton on a regular basis will be Sunday January 11th 2026.

4. The Steering Group will continue to oversee and direct the project activities, with Kathrine (St Aidan's administrator) taking on the HR aspects of line management of Patrick.

5. The Central Hartlepool Group will continue to work together, in support of one another's mission and ministry, through social events, opportunities to worship together outside of main Sunday services (e.g. occasional afternoon / evening / midweek services).

We also have an opportunity to work together in reaching into an area of our town with very little Christian presence, we continue to share in the joys of the project activities such as weekly meditations, pub theology etc., and could see the development of St Columba's as a 'resource hub' for the whole of the group to come together for Lent/Advent courses and other events, as well as the possibility of discipleship courses, PCC away days and so on making use of the facilities available.

While these are decisions that have been taken by the Steering Group, in their role of looking after our Mission Project, we're aware that these changes have a number of knock-on effects into the parishes. If you have any questions, concerns, or observations on any of this that you would like to share then there will be an opportunity for discussion at our next PCC meeting. In the meantime, please feel free to get in touch with one of us.

**Very best wishes,
John & Becky**

Nine Hundred Quiz

- N** Which **N** was a cupbearer?
- I** Which two **I's** were the sons of Abraham?
- N** Which **N** was a disciple?
- E** Which **E** was the first garden?
- H** Camillus de Lellis is the patron saint of **H**?
- U** Which **U** was the 10th King of Judah?
- N** Which **N** was a Galilean Village?
- D** Which **D** was a female Judge?
- R** What **R** delivered food to Elijah?
- E** What **E** Life does Jesus offer all believers?
- D** What **D** is a region south of the Sea of Galilee?



The One

The epitaph on the soldier's grave
 Said 'He was only one,
 But he was our only one'.
 A poignant note from parents
 Mourning their dead son.
 A heart rendering message
 A loving tragic tribute
 To their only well-loved Boy



Another Father knows their feelings so well,
 His Son had to go on a painful rescue mission
 All because of your transgressions.
 To pay your debts for your forgiveness
 To take the weight of stress you caused
 Plus, to give you the chance of life eternally.

Two sons who paid the ultimate price.
 One buried in a foreign land
 With symbol of the One on his grave,
 A reminder of the One who can save,
 To offer life beyond the earthly grave.

George Bainbridge

Ward Jackson CE Update

Meet our Environment Team! These volunteers will take on responsibility for any jobs that keep our school and local environment looking good. From litter picking to gardening, they're ready to help!



Meet our food waste warriors! One of our pupils has put together a plan for reducing food waste and recruited his friends to help. He's set up a weigh station where our daily food waste can be monitored. Our Ward Jackson pupils have really got behind his initiative by making better choices at the counter to make sure they can finish their dinner. [#wardjacksonway](#)



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

**Have you thought about
St Matthew's Community Centre?**

**We have 2 large halls which can accommodate up to 140 persons
as well as 1 large and 2 small kitchens for your catering needs.**

**One hall is even big enough to house a bouncy castle –
ideal for children's parties.**

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

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

Steven McConnell Roofing Contractor

37 Greta Avenue
Hartlepool
TS25 5LE

Tel: 01429 221784

Fax: 01429 281609

Mobile 07850 925183

*Member of the National
Federation of Roofing
Contractors*



THE CARPET DOCTOR
COMMERCIAL & DOMESTIC
CARPET & UPHOLSTERY CLEANING
www.thecarpetdoctor.co.uk



TELEPHONE
01642 566551
Mobile 07770 451111



Victoria House

FUNERAL SERVICE

Under the personal guidance of

 Carl Mean Dip FD, MBIE	 Apolena Wilson Dip FD, MBIFD	 Andrew Evans MBIE	 Andrew Gardner Dip FD
--	--	---	---

**TELEPHONE: (01429) 234777 • 26 VICTORIA ROAD, HARTLEPOOL TS26 8DD
WWW.VICTORIAHOUSEFUNERALSERVICE.CO.UK**

BRABINER CARPETS

**249 – 251 YORK ROAD
HARTLEPOOL
TS26 9AD**

TEL: (01429) 272298



LET US HELP YOU GET THROUGH YOUR LOSS

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

**MASON'S & MEYNELL
FUNERAL DIRECTORS
01429 862021**

**129 Park Road, Hartlepool.
TS26 9HT**



Do you need a Helping Hand?

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

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

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

Keith Walker Ophthalmic Opticians

**28 Victoria Road, Hartlepool
Tel: 01429 275551**

Hartlepool & District Hospice

Provides free palliative care for patients.
Offers of voluntary help are always welcome ,
as are donations.

Please contact us at:

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



Stranton Business Centre

Accountancy, Taxation and Payroll

**49 Stockton Road
Hartlepool
TS25 1TX**

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

Joanna's Poochies Paradise

**147 Elwick Road
Hartlepool
TS26 9BW**

**Pet Shop
&
Dog Grooming**

01429 270056

MOVING HOME?

Does your property need an

ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE?

Then call Andrew Rogers at
Energy Education North
On 07831 314375

energy.education@btconnect.com

A Heavenly Letter

Dear Child

I see you in your pit.

I hear your moans and groans.

I know the depth of your pain.

I feel your disappointment.

When you cry out my name. I hear you.

I come to you. I sit with you in your pit of despair.

I am so close.

I am your comforter.

People will try and speak words of comfort or give you platitudes.

They try to bring you comfort with their well-meaning words.

I comfort your heart.

I am the one who will give you true peace.

It's okay to lament.

I need my children to be real and honest.

Pour it all out onto me. Even the words you can't articulate I hear the sighs.

I can take it all. I have broad shoulders.

I see your helplessness.

Hope comes when you come into my presence.

I am your hope.

"I called on your name, Lord, from the depths of the pit."

Lamentations 3:55 NIV

"You came near when I called you, and you said, "Do not fear.""

Lamentations 3:57 NIV

Ang Hall

Nine Hundred Quiz Answers

N Which N was a cupbearer?

Nehemiah

I Which two I's were the sons of Abraham?

Ishmael and Isaac

N Which N was a disciple?

Nathaniel

E Which E was the first garden?

Eden

H Camillus de Lellis is the patron saint of H?

Hospitals

U Which U was the 10th King of Judah?

Uzziah

N Which N was a Galilean Village?

Nazareth

D Which D was a female Judge?

Deborah

R What R delivered food to Elijah?

Ravens

E What E Life does Jesus offer all believers?

Eternal

D What D is a region south of the Sea of Galilee?

Decapolis

St Matthew's
Community Centre
Elwick Road



Coffee or Tea, Cake and Company

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

Saturday 1st November 2025

Saturday 6th December 2025

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

Our shared harvest

I am just back from our annual harvest assembly at St Aidan's School. I was bowled over by the generosity of the families who had given unstintingly to provide for those in need. It was a vote of confidence from them for the work we do as a church at our Thursday Kitchen, and a sign of trust that we will make good use of what they give us. In the assembly I talked about something which Rev. Martin Luther King said: 'By the time you have eaten breakfast you will have depended on more than half the world'. We thought about all the countries and all the workers in them who we have to thank for our breakfast – tea growers in Kenya, coffee farmers in Brazil, peanut producers in the USA and sugar from India, and we thought about how God made us to be dependent on each other as part of his plan for us. As we see flags going up on our streets celebrating being English and British, let's not forget that our country is dependent on others to be able to live its life to the full, dependent even for things as basic as our daily food.

As the children left the school hall at the end of the assembly one little boy said proudly to me 'I brought that pancake mix' and pointed out a little packet arranged on the stage. He looked at it longingly and I got the distinct impression that he would have liked to have kept it to eat himself, but that he was even more glad to have shared his booty with others. While Hartlepool is turning out young people like this we won't go too far wrong. Thank you St Aidan's School and all its families.

Revd. Becky



Daytime Advent Course

A Christmas Carol - A study course lasting 5 weeks from 18th November at St Columba's at 10:30am for 10:45am start (refreshments available), finish at 12 noon.

We will be reading (or listening to) parts of the story then sharing our views on some questions. The reading is optional as many do not enjoy reading aloud to a group of people.

There are many film versions, and I am sure we all have our favourites!

There are theatre performances at Billingham Forum Theatre the week before the Advent course with ticket prices from £18.50.

Watching the film or theatre production would be an ideal way to prepare for the course and for the Christmas season.

For further information contact:

Revd Becky 01429 671358 Patricia Watson 07708131650

Patricia Watson

Daytime cell group

This takes place on a Tuesday with 10:30am for a 10:45am start. It finishes promptly at 12:00 noon.

After initial chats, we offer prayers as requested by group members. At present we have five regulars, all our Group churches are represented. After prayers there is information about the book we are reading. It is a reading group rather than Bible study. As we read from different versions of the Bible we are able to compare the language used in each version.

Myself and others facilitate the sessions and we jointly agree the book we are reading next and the reason for the choice. eg after Jonah we read Nahum as it explained what was happening in Nineveh. Micah and Habakkuk followed because they had things in common with Nahum.

At present we are reading 1 Peter. Prior to this we read James, as a change from the Old Testament. James isn't often used in our Sunday readings and there's so much in it about living to love God and our neighbours as ourselves.

So far, we have read/will be reading:

Advent 2024 Women of the Nativity, Lent 2025 Women of Holy Week,

Advent 2025 (beginning 18th November 2025) A Christmas Carol

Books of the Bible: Ruth (1st time), Esther, Hosea, Ruth (2nd time), Jonah, Nahum, Micah, Habakkuk; James, 1 Peter.

Please consider joining us for Advent. The book we are using is called 'Book and Bible study Guide' based on the Charles Dickens Classic 'A Christmas Carol', prices vary depending on the supplier although they average about £10. Please do not be put off by the cost of the book as you'll be able to share or, if you prefer, just listen. Reading aloud is optional and no one minds if you would prefer to just listen!

Patricia Watson

The Autumn Budget must deliver urgent action on hunger

New research shows that 14.1 million people – including 3.8 million children – faced hunger in the UK last year because they didn't have enough money for food. Without urgent action to boost incomes in the Autumn Budget, this severe hardship risks becoming the new normal for millions of households.

Hunger in the UK is Trussell's landmark study, delivered in partnership with Ipsos, on the scale, profile and drivers of food insecurity and food bank use across the UK. It's a title that describes the harsh reality facing one in six (16%) households, or 14.1 million people, going without enough food because they cannot afford it. More worrying still, this is a significant increase compared to our first round of research in 2022 when we found one in seven (14%) households, or 11.6 million people were facing hunger in the UK.

Millions of people are being left with no option other than to turn to food banks, and millions more are going hungry without even seeking help from charitable food providers, often because they feel that others need help more.

Young children are particularly badly affected, with one in three (31%) children under five growing up in a food insecure household. Disabled people are disproportionately impacted too. More than a quarter (27%) of disabled people experience food insecurity and nearly three quarters (74%) of people referred to food banks in the Trussell community are disabled. The likelihood of having experienced a change in life circumstances such as job loss, bereavement or a new health problem is higher for people referred to food banks in the Trussell community. And for people who can work, this is no guaranteed route out of hardship. In fact, nearly a third (30%) of people referred to Trussell food banks are in working households - up from 24% in 2022.

At the heart of this very troubling problem is a social security system which is failing to provide enough security when people need it. Over half (52%) of people receiving Universal Credit experienced hunger in the last year, and almost a quarter (23%) had to access a food bank or other charitable food provision. Universal Credit isn't doing the fundamental job of protecting people from going without the essentials.

Food bank need is not about a lack of food, it's about a lack of income. On average, households referred to food banks are left with just £104 a week after housing costs to cover food, energy bills, travel, toiletries, and other essentials. This is only 17% of what the average UK household has left after paying their rent or mortgage. In this context, the UK government's forthcoming Child Poverty Strategy is a golden opportunity to reduce the number of children facing hunger and living in severe hardship. There are sensible funding proposals and routes to maintain fiscal credibility while still delivering ambitious changes to turn the tide on hunger, including much needed updates to our social security system. We must also remember that severe hardship in the UK is costing our public services, the economy, and the public purse to the tune of over £75 billion a year.

'Hunger in the UK' should be a benchmark for the UK government's manifesto commitment to end the need for emergency food.

Going without food and other essentials should not be a routine part of life. The government must use the Child Poverty Strategy and Autumn Budget to go further with changes that people will feel before the end of this Parliament, and deliver on the promises made to voters on food banks, child poverty and living standards. This means:

- Scrapping the cruel two-child limit. This would lift 470,000 children out of hunger and hardship and is a cost-effective way of reducing child poverty, with the additional spending required being almost entirely met by £3.1 billion in fiscal and economic benefits.

Introducing a full protected minimum floor in Universal Credit as a low-cost step towards an Essentials Guarantee. This should limit all reductions to UC, including reductions made due to the benefit cap. This could be set initially at 15% below the standard allowance and would provide people with more security and certainty about how much they will receive each month.

Up-rating Local Housing Allowance in line with the cheapest 30% of local rents. Two fifths (41%) of people referred to food banks had experienced some form of homelessness in the past year, and this has risen from 36% in 2022. The policy of freezing support with housing costs for private renters risks driving even more people into hunger and homelessness and must end.

The Chancellor has said she wants the Autumn Budget to be about delivering 'opportunity for all'. This will only be possible with urgent action to reduce the levels of hardship in our communities.



Bacon Butty and Harvest Festival Service



On 28th September we held a Bacon Butty Sunday in St Mathew's CC between the morning services.

This enabled BB, Guides and both Congregations to enjoy a very tasty Bacon Butty and a Cuppa - it was very well supported.

Then we made our way down to church for the Harvest Festival Service where our Anchors and Juniors played 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' and the chorus of 'We Plough the Fields and Scatter' on Boom Whackers.

Corporal Tyler Anderson read a passage from the bible and our Colours, along with the Brownies and Guides, were presented to Rev John.

Our very colourful Autumn displays by all Sections were placed on the south side of church - photos are on Facebook and in Signpost.

All our sections are now planning to make a Remembrance Day Display for church.

Our other activities in each Section have included various games, crafts, marching and drill. We have promoted Casey Cornforth and Lucas Hansford to Lance Corporals - they are now working towards further promotions.

In addition, we have restarted our Band on Friday Nights.

Fund Raising

On Saturday 22nd November we are holding our Christmas Fayre at St Matthew's CC from 09:30 – 12 noon.

Bargains Galore are guaranteed!

We are collecting Bric a Brac (No clothing please) and if you would like it collecting, please contact George Bainbridge on 07816445829.

A chilly way of raising Funds!

On Boxing Day we are offering our Company Lads a chance to raise some funds by taking part in the Boxing Day Dip at Seaton Carew.

Again, if you would like to raise funds for us contact us on 07816445829

New Members

We still have room for new members in each Section:

Anchors 6:00-7:00pm every Friday Night

Juniors 6:30-8:00pm every Monday Night

Company 7:05 – 9:00pm every Friday Night (Band Practice - from 6:15pm)

All at St Matthew's CC and Subs are £2.00 per night

George Bainbridge

Boy's Brigade

Fun and games at our Juniors Section the last couple of weeks.



Cup Engineering at t's finest!!!

Our Anchor Boys preparing their Harvest Festival Display



Sunday
9th November 2025
4:00 to 5:30

St Matthew's
Community Centre
Elwick Road

**Bible
Story**

**The Kingdom of God
Making Bread**

**Shared
Meal**

Crafts

Games

Singing

*Lots of Fun for
all the Family*

Gardening News – Autumn

We are once again coming to the end of the gardening season, after our hottest summer on record. This has meant frequent watering, bearing in mind the need to preserve our limited water supplies. We have taken to collecting tap water whilst running water for washing up and then recycling the water afterwards to water the pots and baskets (as recommended by Monty Don on Gardeners' World). As a result, the hanging baskets are only now fading and the potted plants are mostly still going strong. Some of the roses have had a very welcome late flowering. One in particular stands out in my garden and that is a David Austin Olivia Rose, which has been covered in flowers in recent weeks, probably because I pruned it quite hard after its first major show of flowers in June/July (again, as recommended by the venerable Monty).

We have recently returned from our usual autumnal visit to Scotland, where we once again visited Blair Castle, home of giant redwoods, which we have visited many times.

This year we have discovered a new (to us) beautiful Japanese garden near Stirling, which was still full of colour, with red, orange and yellow Acers, as well as many other ornamental trees, ferns, water lilies and some late flowering hydrangeas. This part of Scotland has obviously not suffered the droughts that other parts of the UK have experienced. We walked round the gardens in the pouring rain - to begin with we were the only ones in the gardens apart from one wet but hardy gardener - before joining everyone else in the coffee bar. We can't complain about this though, because we had good (even on occasions, sunny) weather up till that point. I remind myself that, without the rain, we wouldn't have the stunning scenery, with lochs, rivers, mysterious Scottish mists, velvet mountains (when the mists aren't hiding them), trees and plants. Even the country roads are lined with trees, often forming an arch over the road.

While we were there, we visited Scone Palace (and Glamis Castle, where the late Queen Mother grew up and where you can see two small children's chairs positioned in front of the fireplace, where the young Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret used to sit when they were visiting their Scottish grandparents).

Back in my own garden, we are now busy tidying up and cutting back overgrown bushes, trying to make maximum use of the limited remaining garden bin collections. This summer, as well as our magpie friend, Jet, we have been joined by another feathered friend in the form of a pigeon. He came to us in unhappy circumstances. He appeared in late August, when he took up residence for several days in our back garden. We finally came to the conclusion, after watching him try to take off, that he had a flight problem, ie he couldn't fly. We fed and watered him and rang the RSPCA, who told me that he had probably left the nest too early and didn't have the strength to fly back up. This meant that he was very vulnerable, especially as a local cat had clocked his whereabouts and kept returning and having to be chased away. After a few more days, I rang a local vet, who would have taken him off us, but said that the pigeon would probably have to be put to sleep. This had now become a life or death decision on behalf of our feathered friend! At this point I consulted 'Our' Angela (churchwarden/retired vet), who wisely suggested that we should keep feeding him for a few more days and encourage

him to fly. To add to the drama, that same day we spotted a sparrowhawk in the garden, along with a tell-tale pile of feathers on the lawn. Naturally, we feared the worst, but the pigeon reappeared the next day, totally unconcerned, as if nothing had happened.

The pigeon story continues. At this point in the proceedings my brother-in-law intervened and offered to look after said pigeon if we could catch him! The plan was to leave a pet carrier on the grass with the door open and a trail of pigeon food leading into it. Clearly, the pigeon would then, of course, enter the pet carrier and an observer (me) would close the door on him. To this end I got up early the next morning and spent an hour observing, ready to rush out into the garden, secure the door and save the day. The pigeon, however, did not understand his role in this plan and failed to make an appearance. That is an hour of my life that I will never get back!

You will, I am sure, be pleased to know that this story has a happy ending. The sparrowhawk was never seen again, the cat didn't get lucky and the pigeon learned to fly! Since then, he visits us every day, possibly because we are still feeding him, but I like to think that he looks on our garden as his home. We can distinguish him from other pigeons, as he has a distinctive, clumsy looking walk, especially when going downhill, eg on a roof (I can only describe it as a plod) and his feathers are not as smooth and as well coiffured as his friends'. He has also got to know us and allows us to get quite close to him.

I promised to research some time ago the subject of prayer gardens. A prayer garden is described by Google as "a dedicated outdoor or indoor space created for quiet contemplation, reflection and spiritual connection, fostering a sense of peace and reverence ... often designed with symbolic elements to inspire faith and provide a connection to the divine". The key characteristics of a prayer garden are: it is a quiet and reflective space; it focuses on a connection with nature, linking spiritual reflection with the beauty and order of creation; it has symbolic features such as statues, fountains or inscriptions from scripture; and, it can be tailored to the needs and beliefs of an individual or community.

This links very closely with the explanation of the ethos of a Japanese garden, which was described in the garden that we have just visited as being "designed to help us escape the everyday world and connect with natural wonders". Everything is positioned with care and purpose and everything has meaning. There is a major focus on water (ponds, water features, streams) as a life-giving force and zig-zag paths "mirror life as we navigate our way through challenges, changing direction as we go".

I think most believers (of whatever religion) would agree that nature, from wild, rugged landscapes to formal, man-made garden spaces offers us a spiritual connection with the God who created this wonderful world.

Alas, my next and final trip of the year is unlikely to yield much in the way of garden news, as we are going south this time, to visit friends, and the main focus of the visit will not be gardens but cars - a visit to the British Motor Museum at Gaydon, Warwickshire followed by a Grand Prix weekend – you win some, you lose some!

Pam Stockton



Boy Brigade Christmas Fayre



On Saturday 22nd November
we are holding our Christmas Fayre
at St Matthew's CC
from 09:30am - 12noon

Bargains Galore are guaranteed!!

We are collecting Bric a Brac (No clothing please) and if you would like it
collecting please contact George Bainbridge on 07816 445829

Cakes



Toys



Bric a Brac

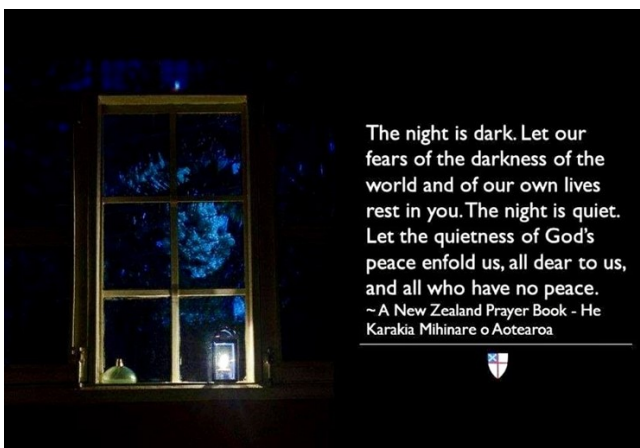


Books

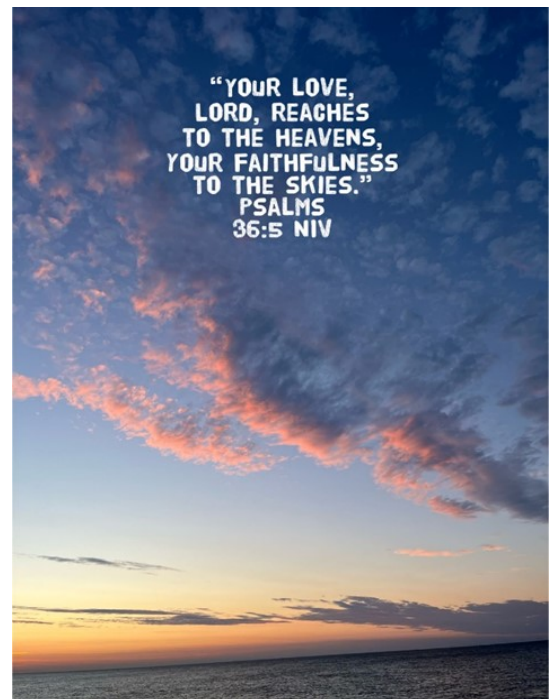
Pies

Tombola

Bargains Galore— All Welcome



The night is dark. Let our
fears of the darkness of the
world and of our own lives
rest in you. The night is quiet.
Let the quietness of God's
peace enfold us, all dear to us,
and all who have no peace.
~ A New Zealand Prayer Book - He
Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa



"YOUR LOVE,
LORD, REACHES
TO THE HEAVENS,
YOUR FAITHFULNESS
TO THE SKIES."
PSALMS
36:5 NIV

CELEBRATE!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!
to

November

Jenna Bruce

Daniel Busby

Sally Clarke

Linda Cartwright

Jasmine Padgett

Sylvia Shepherd

Mike Weimer



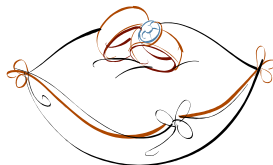
Wedding Anniversary

John & Rebecca Bell



Wedding

Congratulations to
Alex Craig & Ruairidh MacIntosh
On their marriage on 4th October



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.

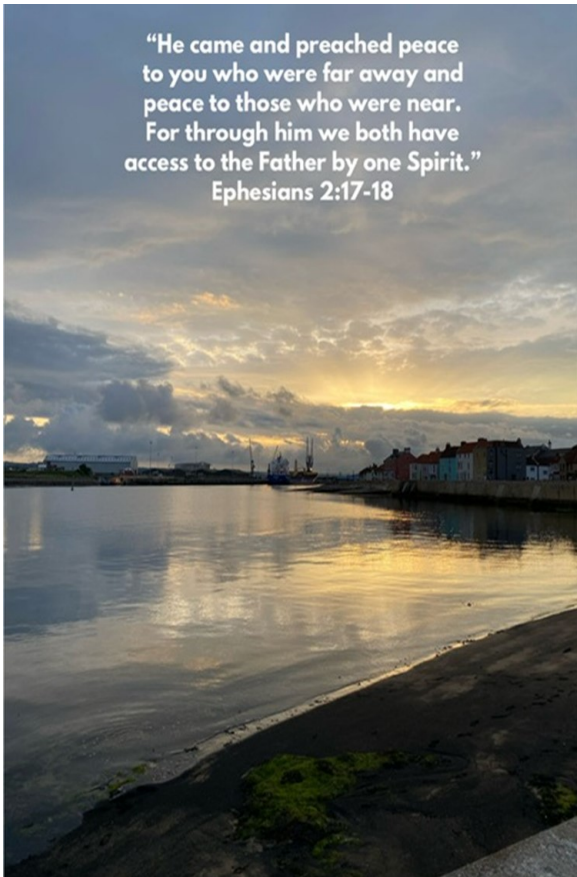
Dates for the Diary

Sun 2 nd November	All Saints Day	9.00am & 11.00am
	All Souls Service	4.00pm.

Church 900 Year Celebrations to be launched on All Saints Day 2025 and end on All Saints Day 2026.

Sun 9th November Remembrance Sunday, service to start at 10:55am

Sat 22nd November BB Christmas Fayre at St Matthew's CC
09:30am - 12noon



Come and see the church decorated for Christmas and listen to Carols being played by the Hartlepool Brass Band at our



ST LUKE'S CHURCH & PARISH CENTRE

Saturday 29th November

10.00am till Noon

Cakes Raffle Tombola

New Gifts Books Bric a Brac

Cakes Children's Crafts

Children's Bran Tub

Sewing Party Stall

£1 entry

Children (under 12) free

Everyone Welcome!

Enjoy a cuppa and a chat!

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: **revdjohndbell@stranton-church.org.uk**

Curate
 Revd Claire Mead (Stranton & St Luke's) 07598 070481
 Email: **curate@stranton-church.org.uk**
 Usual day off – Friday

Reader
 Mary Tones 40a Blakelock Road 07972 342890
 Hayley Liversidge hayey@hartlepoolcch.coh.org.uk 07712008772

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.

