Stranton and Burbank Community

SIGNPOST



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

November 2026

Communion Explained… (The musings of a priest)

In October, we returned to sharing the common cup in our communion services. During the services where we made this move, I included some teaching and explanation of communion, shared with me by a colleague from another diocese. My (slightly longer) article this month revisits those words…

Ever since a spring evening, near Jerusalem, when two grieving friends invited a stranger to join them for a meal and recognised the risen Christ, Holy Communion has been the distinctive form of worship for most Christians. Whether it takes place in a vast cathedral with heavily embroidered vestments and beautiful music or in a hut with a packing case for a table, the action is the same. Bread and wine are shared in response to the Lord's command, 'Do this in remembrance of me', and then the gathered community goes out into the world to witness to the gospel.

The Eucharist uses colours, light, music, movement and sometimes smell. It is The Lord's Supper. It (The Eucharist) is about Jesus being risen and present among us, but it is also about betrayal, suffering and death. It is a lived story. It is love in action.

The Eucharist is a meal with four courses; a meal full of all the nourishment we need to live as Christians; a meal where we feast and celebrate the love of God who is present through the Bible, through each other and through bread & wine. And every time we meet to eat this meal together, we have become different people since the last time, because of the encounters we have had and the things we have learnt.

Now we all know that an important part of the routine of getting ready to share a meal is to wash our hands. Washing is about making ourselves clean to eat, preparing ourselves so that we can enjoy the meal together. During a service the 'washing hands' is about saying sorry to God and is the confessional rite of the church. In terms of the Eucharist, it is a part of our preparation. Being absolved or forgiven from our sins is as important as recognising that we physically clean before we eat.

THE <u>FIRST</u> COURSE: THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

The first course is when we feed on God's word together. We do this by listening to readings from the bible and hearing how we can live out God's words in our everyday lives. So, we begin with our readings. Different readings (from both the Old and New Testament) are set for every single day of the year on a three year cycle. Our readings always include a Gospel reading for the day.

In many Church of England and Catholic Churches, it is traditional to stand for the Gospel. This indicates its central place in the life and worship of the Church. When I was at school it was the custom to stand when the head teacher entered the room. Therefore if Jesus is the head of the church we stand when we hear his words and actions.

After our readings, we then have our sermon, which I discovered when looking up material for our services, is not an obligatory part of a communion service, but it is usual especially on Sundays. The sermon expounds (opens up) the readings or issues relevant to the congregation or wider world.

The Creed normally follows on from the sermon. We usually say the Nicene Creed which refers to we rather than I. This is to emphasise that we come to Christ not just as individuals, but as a body of believers who worship together and care for one another.

THE SECOND COURSE: THE PEACE

The sharing of the peace is a pivotal point of the Eucharist. In the same way that we encounter the living Jesus in his word, we encounter the living God in each other. This is the place in the Communion service where our focus shifts from one place – the encounter with Jesus in the word – to the altar and the bread and wine. The peace recognises us as a community of faith, of all ages. The sharing of the peace is a time when we truly offer our gifts and ourselves. A time when we recognise our unity and togetherness. As ever the Christian family is not perfect and needs grace, humility and forgiveness, which is possible through Jesus, enabling us to come together.

THE THIRD COURSE: THE MINISTRY OF THE SACRAMENT

This is another large course which has a fourfold shape – this part of the service has action in it.

- Bringing / taking – the bread & wine are brought to the altar or communion table
- Giving thanks / blessing
- Breaking
- Receiving

We are not passive people, but active participants. The priest who says the great prayer of thanksgiving is called the president – not because he or she has a big Oval Office or Airforce 1 to get them about, but because he or she presides on behalf of all of us. Let me ask you a question – who breaks the bread? We all do - because he or she presides on behalf of all of us. The ministry of the sacrament is the point where we gather and break bread. We share together in the same way as we have

done through the other two courses, but we are also breaking open Jesus to share him. The priest will stand with his or her hands outstretched, praying and inviting people to join in the feast. We can all join in the prayer; it is the big 'thank you' prayer of the church.

It is worth saying here that many people struggle or have differing views over the presence of Jesus in the bread and wine – ranging from the belief that the bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Christ, through to the belief that they are just bread and wine. This is the question over the 'real presence of Jesus'. While wishing to respect individual convictions it's important to recognise that somehow Jesus is present.

In the book 'How to be an Anglican' by Richard Giles he writes, 'The great thing about the sacraments is that Jesus always shows up!'

It is also a good time to explain that receiving communion is still receiving communion if you only partake in one of the elements (the bread or the wine). So if you can't eat bread & there is no gluten free available or you have a cold and would rather not share your germs in the wine that is fine. However Jesus shows up, He shows up fully and completely whether we receive in one kind, in both kinds, or even if we only come to receive a prayer of blessing.

So let us rejoice in our diversity and celebrate the presence of Jesus in whatever way is comfortable and appropriate to us.

THE <u>FOURTH</u> COURSE: EAT IN OR TAKE AWAY?

When I was young, I was taught to always say 'Thank you for my tea. Please may I get down from the table?' I was usually requesting permission to leave so that the adults could get on with their talking, which was boring to me! But at the heart of the request was a plea to go. The Catholic tradition of the church refers to Holy Communion as the 'Mass'. This word is rooted in the Latin missa: 'being sent'. We are sent people of God, and we have permission to go, but, because we are going from a table, we are full of that food. In Holy Communion, we take our food to feed a hungry and broken world. That is why the dismissal in the Eucharist is more than just permission to leave the table: it is permission to feed the world. It's not an escape clause; it's an engagement clause. To carry the food analogy further, we are an eat-in and takeaway establishment! We are the carry-out bags that Christ uses to feed a hungry and needy world.

Grace and Peace, Revd John

From the Home Front

I know my life can get incredibly busy at times, what with church activities and roles, grandparent and parent duties, gardening, housework, shopping and cooking, paid work (yes, I still do some of that!), keeping in touch with friends and family and all the extras that seem to creep into each day…
Also, our homes and electronic devices seem to take over our lives as they become increasingly 'busy' and cluttered with 'stuff' and information (usually that we don't ask for or want!). So, this morning I spent some time on my mobile phone removing 'contacts' who are no longer part of my life and in a few cases, no longer part of life! I went into call records and removed old and missed call notifications. I cleaned out my browsing profile and then deleted lots of adverts, repeated communications and assorted detritus from my Facebook page. The removal of non-essential /no longer required emails from the computer in box is my next job!

In our home we have had to have some long overdue repair work to some extension rooms behind our garage. These were used by my other half as his office space and for his home brew store. As no one else really ventured into these rooms they were exceedingly cluttered and untidy, having become a bit of a dumping ground! Himself had to sift through years of paperwork and office equipment to decide what needed to stay and what could go… Several trips to the charity shop, BB and the dump and the clutter diminished, then the rest has gone into a temporary storage unit until the work is finished. We are now reassessing if everything in storage really does need to return or can we have a more streamlined and efficient office and store room?

Our home and my day-to-day technology life will certainly be improved by the reassessing of what is necessary and what is extraneous. Removing unwanted possessions, dumping the broken and outdated bits and generally cleaning out the rubbish will make a real difference.

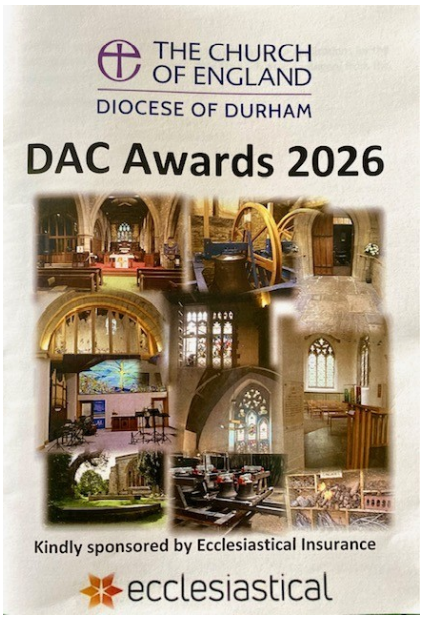
As I have worked through this process, I have felt God saying that is also what I need to do with my faith life. Therefore, I am looking into the contents of my prayer life, checking through my worship and praise accounts, looking carefully at how I act and what I say. I'm finding murky corners and stacks of stuff that needs sorting out. God is helping me and hopefully at the end of the process He will have guided me to realise what I need to keep and improve on and what I been holding on to that has been weighing me down…

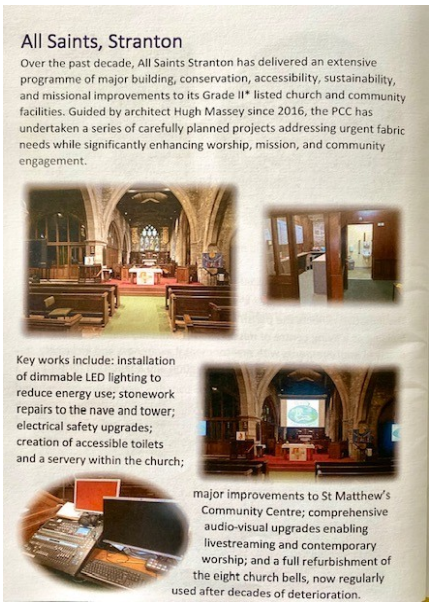
J.A.R.

DAC Awards 2026 - Stranton Wins Prestigious Award



Revd John receiving the award from Hon Adrian Isles, the Diocesan Chancellor





Stranton Church has won an award from the Diocese of Durham for it's work on improving the church building and bell tower, for the continuing benefit of the local community.

The awards, sponsored by Ecclesiastical Insurance, were from the Durham Diocesan Advisory Committee recognising good practice in church maintenance and improvements across the Diocese of Durham.

Revd John said "It was wonderful to receive this award on behalf of the parishioners, who, over many centuries, have given their time, talents and finance to promote God's presence here in Hartlepool".

There were six categories for the awards and Stranton came runner up in the "Sustainabilty" category and won the "Missional Impact" category. This success is due to the time, passion and money given by parishioners and bell ringers over many years and their efforts are greatly appreciated.

The award was a fitting pre finale to the year celebrating 900 years of Stranton Church, while awaiting the coming visit of Bishop Rick on 1st November, All Saints Day. The awards are now on display in church.

Andrew Rogers.

Eva Busby
28th June 1935 - 6th September 2026



Eva's funeral took place in Stranton Church on 5th October led by Revd Claire. Members of her family were pallbearers and the flowers on her coffin were yellow and burgundy, a reminder that Eva was a player and coach of netball to a national level and she was a member of the England Netball Association.

Eva was the eldest of seven children who lived in the Burbank area originally. She had to leave her scholarship at the High School for Girls to earn a wage to help support her family. She worked in Cerbos (later RHM Foods), initially in the factory and after some years, in the offices. She was an excellent football player and set-up a ladies football team when the boys stopped her playing because her tackles were 'too rough! She later became heavily involved in netball.

She married Mack at Stranton Church in 1954, just before he departed to complete his National Service. He was sent to Tripoli and Eva was able to join him when married quarters became available. Eva had to return to England when the Suez Crisis erupted in 1956. Eva had three children – Stephen, Alison and Simon. Her husband Mack died in the 1980s and Eva had to return to work. She worked for the ambulance and fire brigade services until her retirement. As her higher education had been curtailed, in her retirement she studied and achieved A' level literature at the Sixth Form College alongside a class of 16 year olds.

Eva made lifelong friends within her workplaces and her sporting associations, as well as within Stranton Church. She attended Stranton for many years starting in the Young Wives Group. Eva had a lifelong love of the outdoors – camping (despite the midges) and later owning a caravan near Gothland.

Her later years were spent living with Stephen and his wife Barbara, then in Charlotte Grange Care Home where she was well cared for and very happy. Eva was 'a remarkable lady' who will be greatly missed by her extended family and all her friends from so many walks of life. Rest in Peace Eva.

J.A.R.

Barbara Butcher

On the last weekend of September Barbara passed away. Barbara was a longstanding member of Stranton Parish active in many aspects of the life of the church and St Matthew's Community Centre.

Barbara helped with the Junior Section of the Boys Brigade from the mid 1980's until the early 1990's. She organised the Juniors' visits to the fire station, railway station and Police Station. In the Company section her running of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme enabled Gary Wright, Stewart McClean and Philip Jukes to gain their Gold Awards.

Barbara also served on the PCC. However, she will be mostly remembered for being the driving force in the remodelling and modernising of St Matthew's Hall (as it was then) into the Community Centre, with the much improved facilities and accessibility, that we have today. She was tenacious in her pursuit of grants to enable all the work to be completed and her handling of the finances was testament to her accountancy career.

On a personal level I benefitted by the number of garden duties for which she recommended me. (I even felt I had more jobs than the former Chancellor George Osborne).

I will miss our weekly cuppa and her scrutiny of my bets - she always forecast disappointment and sadly most weeks she was correct!

As previously stated, Barbara's legacy and testament is the modern updating of St Matthew's Community Centre and as Boys Brigade leader of the 4th Hartlepool we enjoy the benefits of that legacy weekly.

George Bainbridge





Barbara Butcher - An appreciation



Barbara, who died recently, was the driving force behind the rescuing and upgrading of St Matthew's Community Centre which began over 25 years ago.

At that time the building was in a very poor state: the leaking main roof; a failing heating system; inadequate toilet provision; a small rudimentary kitchen; and two cold, damp meeting rooms together with a boarded up former stage being used for storage and a room above, difficult to access

As a church warden, I was asked by Stephen Taylor, the then vicar of All Saints, Stranton, to try to form a management committee to begin to address the running of the St Matthew's Church Hall, which at that time had virtually no financial income. It seemed a daunting undertaking!

It was only when Brian Watson, a fellow committee member appointed by the PCC, suggested we ask Barbara to join us, that we started to make progress. She came with the experience and expertise from running her own business, Stranton Business Centre. She was also, as a former leader, committed to Boys Brigade which has met for decades at St Matthew's. Furthermore, she had a strong conviction about the importance of the Hall in the local community. Barbara also served for several years on Stranton PCC.

So she began the challenging task of sorting out the financial management of the building. The aim was to get it to be self-supporting and to find funding for repairs and regeneration. Step by step, Barbara found ways to access grants, pursuing the gruelling process of completing application forms, with the invaluable help of Peter Gowland of the former Hartlepool Voluntary Development Agency. Breaking down the overall project into manageable parts, with the aid of several grants over the years, the renamed St Matthew's Community Centre gained new central heating, new electrical wiring, a new roof, renewed meeting rooms, three kitchens, office space for the church, new toilets etc and became more and more self-supporting.

Barbara's final project was seeing through the completion of a new large kitchen, storage area and accessible toilet available to both the small and the large hall.

Prior to this the Community Centre (especially with Committee member Carol Laud's help), managed to save the parking area from redevelopment into housing by the Hartlepool Borough Council and to persuade it, instead, to give a new long lease for a peppercorn rent. Thus, the feasibility of the Centre for the community's use was secured by safe parking, especially for children and the elderly. Also at St Matthew's Committee's request, the Council agreed to resurface the car park and secure it with fencing for protection against vandalism to the building and also the access for the neighbouring local residents.

Barbara had a strong commitment to the local community, working with the Burn Valley Residents Association, which has given its long-standing support to the Centre. She also encouraged new users in their initiatives. Upgrading St Matthew's was as much about its service to the community as to its upkeep as a building. Barbara's determination, persistence, in spite of considerable stress, and her Christian faith over twenty plus years, means that St Matthew's Community Centre continues to provide a valuable meeting place in the local community. Thank you, Barbara.
Diana Wanduragala

Catherine Wheel Quiz

C Which **C** saint carried Christ over a river?
A What **A** did Noah Build?
T Which **T** apostle was a twin?
H Which **H** is a saint associated with Whitby?
E Which **E** was taken up to heaven in a chariot of Fire**?**
R Which **R** is the last book in the New Testament?
I Which **I** has 66 chapters?
N Which **N** was a prophet to David?
E Which **E** was the father on Methuselah?

W What **W** did Jesus and Peter do?
H Which **H** was the mother of Samuel?
E Which **E** was the first Garden?
E Which **E** a King of England, was a saint?
L Which **L** was written by Moses?





Kate Lawson receives her Bishop's Authorisation of Lay Minister of the Word





Connie Robinson, a sub warden of Lay Ministers from Durham Diocese, presents Kate with her authorisation certificate after prayers by Revd John.

900th Anniversary Harvest Quiz 10th October





A Saturday evening of fun and frivolity was enjoyed a couple of weeks ago. The teams fielded participants aged from 7 to 70 plus years old and the questions reflected this. However, Revd Claire needs to hone her specialist "James Bond" knowledge! Many thanks to Jacqui (who also organised the table rounds) and Maureen who organised the refreshments. The winning team, "Last But Not Least" won a tub of Celebrations sweets and the members of the "wooden spoon" team (who we won't name to spare their blushes) each won a Stranton 2026 Calendar! Thanks to Andrew for organising the event and coming up with four rounds of head scratching quiz questions!

Ward Jackson CE Primary Update

As we reach the end of another busy half term, we want to say a huge thank you to our fantastic children and dedicated staff.
It's been a week full of achievements and a half term full of learning, laughter and memorable moments. We couldn't be prouder.
Happy Half Term and enjoy the break! 🍂 ✨









The bags are unpacked, the excitement is sky high, and the adventures are underway! 🏴

Our Year 6 children have had a fantastic first day in the Lake District and are already making memories to last a lifetime.





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

Have you thought about

St Matthew's Community Centre?

We have 2 large halls which can accommodate up to 140 persons as well as 1 large and 2 small kitchens for your catering needs. One hall is even big enough to house a bouncy castle – ideal for children's parties.

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

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

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Gardening News – Autumn

Autumn has brought some welcome rain (but unwelcome strong winds!), bringing life back to the garden after the long dry months of summer. My garden is still quite colourful, with pots still in bloom, baskets no longer at their best but making an effort to keep going, roses still budding, late flowering asters showing off their bright purple flowers and, of course, chrysanthemums crowned with flowers of many colours, all of them “bright and beautiful”. After a quick tidy-up, my garden is possibly looking better than it did during the summer, apart from the roses, which are still producing buds, but nothing like the mass of blooms that we had in June and July. The silver birch is now starting to shed its leaves and the front lawn is covered in berries from our cherry blossom trees, which are two of the few remaining trees planted by the builders of our estate thirty years ago. Many of the others have sadly fallen victim to the propensity to pave gardens to provide parking space.

Talking of trees, I have recently visited Thorpe Perrow Arboretum, in Bedale, where the trees were bedecked in various shades of Autumn colours. The Acers were aglow with red and orange tones, one particularly impressive specimen reflected its red leaves in a nearby lake, which was a sight to behold. During the summer one of the main attractions there is the hydrangeas, but most of them had lost their vibrant blues, pinks and lilacs, though still managing some pale pinks and cream. There weren’t as many as usual, so I think some had been lost during the drought, which I fear is what has happened to one of my own. I have cut it back quite drastically and will just have to see if it survives the winter. Unfortunately, at 30+ years old, it is our oldest plant and one of special significance.

Other attractions at Thorpe Perrow are meerkats, wallabies, goats and sheep, as well as birds of prey, which can be viewed in their cages, but which give a wonderful flying display at set times of the day. Their handler gives a very informative talk during their performance, giving insights into the character and life of the birds. One of the birds on display was a large Turkmenian eagle owl called Colin, who at one point flew towards his handler through a gap between me and another member of the audience and it was wonderful to feel his wing brush against my sleeve. His handler was at pains to draw a distinction, however, between his ‘cuteness’ and the reality of the life and hunting habits of a bird of prey, which I will refrain from repeating here! Another attraction at the arboretum is Rodney, the talking raven, who will, if he feels the urge, speak to visitors and has been known to utter the occasional expletive, though the only word we heard him utter on this visit was “Hello”.

Our own bird, the foster pigeon, who is now known as Pedro (a granddaughter decided that after a year he needed a name), is still with us and seems to be thriving. I think he has friends because every time I go into the back garden, I hear a mad scramble from the branches of the silver birch as various pigeons and doves fly off in the opposite direction.

I have recently been working my way through the Book of Psalms and came across this verse in Psalm 90:

> "May the favour of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us – yes, establish the work of our hands."

This got me thinking and this is what I thought – this seems like an appropriate prayer for gardeners and anyone who grows things. We use the resources that God has given us, sowing seeds and planting in the earth, then watering and taking care of the resulting plants, crops, trees etc and trusting that God will establish the work of our hands and that our gardens will grow.

To quote the afore-mentioned hymn, written by Cecil Frances Alexander and published in 1848:

> "All things bright and beautiful, All creatures great and small,
> All things wise and wonderful, the Lord God made them all.
> Each little flower that opens, each little bird that sings,
> He made their glowing colours, He made their tiny wings."

Amen to that and thank you, God!
Pam Stockton





Refugee Action

We've struggled with whether to share this with you or not. The reasons for that I think will become obvious, but sitting quietly has never been our way of working - we are called Refugee Action after all.

Members of staff at Refugee Action are being targeted by online hate groups because of the work we do. Our colleagues and friends across the sector are facing the same. Our names have been plastered across social media, calling us traitors, threatening violence against us and suggesting that we are a danger to our country because of the work we do.

So let us make this very clear.
We are proud of that work. It is utterly vital, and we will never stop welcoming refugees, no matter how they got here or what their journey looked like. The people we work with have shown remarkable bravery in seeking a new life free from hatred and fear. We should meet that with bravery of our own.

We will not submit to the racist bullies who are trying to cause more harm, more fear and more aggression. We will take on any challenge to ensure we're working towards a world where we can all live in safety, surrounded by community and people we love.
We're taking steps to ensure our staff, the families and individuals we work with are safe. We can't pretend it's not alarming - we've seen the danger that this kind of rhetoric enacts. We've seen it marching through our streets, starting fires, shouting racist slurs. But we know, with you, we're stronger.

Together, we're on the right side of history. We know we need to fight this with every ounce of energy we have, even when it's scary. With your support, those 'traitors' who work every day to meet refugees with welcome, not hatred, will keep showing up.
If you would like to help us keep the fight going, please donate today.

Hannah – Campaigns Team

St Luke's Agape Meal September 26th



A group of twelve members of St Luke's and Stranton congregations met in St Luke's Church Rooms. A varied selection of tasty savoury and sweet foods were brought by everyone who attended. During the meal Revd John lit a candle to signify the presence of Christ, said grace so we could start to eat, then led us in sections through the communion service as we ate, culminating in us sharing the bread and the wine.



It was a relaxed occasion and there was plenty of conversation, fellowship and laughter. Everyone worked together to clear away and wash up. And the leftover food was shared out for supper or for refreshments in our churches the next day.

YOU would be very welcome to attend the next time a meal is organised.

J.A.R.

Catherine Wheel Quiz Answers

C Which C saint carried Christ over a river?	**Christopher**
A What A did Noah Build?	**Ark**
T Which T apostle was a twin?	**Thomas**
H Which H is a saint associated with Whitby?	**Hilda**
E Which E was taken up to heaven in a chariot of Fire?	**Elijah**
R Which R is the last book in the New Testament?	**Revelations**
I Which I has 66 chapters?	**Isaiah**
N Which N was a prophet to David?	**Nathan**
E Which E was the father on Methuselah?	**Enoch**
W What W did Jesus and Peter do?	**Walk on Water**
H Which H was the mother of Samuel?	**Hannah**
E Which E was the first Garden?	**Eden**
E Which E a King of England, was a saint?	**Edward the Confessor**
L Which L was written by Moses?	**Leviticus**

Harvest Festival with Parade by Uniformed Organisations





It was a full church that greeted the Boys Brigade and Girl Guide flag bearers to mark our Harvest Celebrations. The service was led by Kate, the Bible readings were by Company Lads from the Boys Brigade, with Revd John giving the sermon.

The generous food donations and money from the collection went to support Hartlepool Food Bank.



A display of Fairtrade Food



The church displayed work by BB and the Guides





Macmillan fundraiser at Coffee, Cake and Conversation on October 3rd



The event was very well attended with over 50 adults and children enjoying an array of delicious scones, cakes and quiches. There was a quiz to aid conversation and interaction plus a raffle to raise extra funds. The afternoon raised over £400 to support the amazing work of Macmillan Cancer Support.







Bacon Butty and Harvest Festival



We had a bacon butty day on the morning of the Harvest Festival at St Mathew's CC and a record number of butties were consumed. Many thanks to Paula Hanlon and Kay Matthews who did all the hard work.

At the Harvest Festival Service the Anchor Boys and Juniors had made a very colourful display which was on show and was based on the Bible readings selected for the service.
The Company Lads presented our Colours to Revd John and Kate and used our refurbished flag stand for the first time at church - most importantly it didn't fall over!

Our NCO's Sgt Tyler Anderson, Sgt Billy Ratcliffe and L/Cpl Tyler McGreggor read the bible passages and our adult leaders helped the Prayer Station part of the service.



We had a representative of the Company there, especially the older Lads which was pleasing to see.

Harvest Parade Bacon Butties organised by BB and their helpers.



Boys Brigade

Stranton Surprise
On the 1st November, All Saints Day and the final celebration of the 900th Anniversary Year our Company has a surprise for every member of Stranton.

Anchor Boys (For 5 - 8year olds)
Have been enjoying colouring, sticking, dot to dot, spotting the difference and simple first aid plus lots of games and most importantly FUN.
We still have spaces for more members.

The Juniors
We are starting to recruit now and are up to 17 in number.
We have been marching, crafting and playing games. Very shortly we will be practicing handbells for the Boys Brigade Christmas Carol Service. There are still spaces for a few more members.

Company Section
After the success of Camp (Thanks Revd John), the numbers have greatly increased, and we now have 30 Lads and are still attracting more. Of course, with these numbers it produces challenges that we have not had to meet in years.
We are developing an active Friday night programme for four groups to run simultaneously which is hard work for our timer Rohan.
Our Band has grown as a result of the higher numbers and we now seven members practicing regularly.
We are accepting recruits, but on a limited basis until our numbers settle down.

Remembrance Day
The Anchors, Juniors and Company will be making a display that hopefully we can put up in church.
Captain Wells of the TA will be visiting our Juniors to talk about Remembrance Day.

Future Events
Recruiting Course at Chester le Street - a few leaders are attending this course hopefully to receive tips on attracting more Boys to Anchors and Juniors.

Christmas Fayre - Saturday November 21st from 9.30 - 12noon at St Matthew's CC - we are collecting bric-a-brac please ring George Bainbridge 07816445829 or drop off donations on a Monday or Friday night at St Matthew's CC.

Boys Brigade Christmas Carol Service on Friday 11th December in Stranton Church from 7.15 - 8.00pm. All welcome.

Rejection to Restoration

The screeching, raspy morning call of the old cockerel woke me from my sweet sleep. I stretched with my eyes still closed.
I reached out my arm beside me, hoping to feel the warmth of my man beside me. The bed sheets were cold. He had already gone.
I had known he wouldn't have been by my side. He had gone back to his family. It hurt to share him. I slowly got out of bed and poured water into a bowl to wash myself. Annoyingly, I noticed there was only enough water left for a wash and my next meal. That would mean I needed to take a trip to the well. I pushed that disturbing thought aside, put on my cleanest dress, and started rolling out some bread for breakfast.
I then recited the prayer that I had learnt on my mother's knee.
Praise to You, our Elohim, the Living One.
You have rescued our Forefathers with Your great might.
Praise to You, the Only One; You are the Ruler of all rulers.
Tears came to my eyes. A loneliness crept over me. I couldn't finish my prayer. I missed praying with my family.
The gentle knock on my door stirred me from my gloomy thoughts.
No one came to my door during the day. I slowly opened the door, fearing who would be behind it. There stood my beautiful little sister.
"Miriam", what are you doing here? I quickly pulled her inside and slammed the door shut. I turned and enveloped her in my arms.
We stood entwined for a while. It had been so long since my own flesh and blood had held me. My parents had disowned me after the second divorce. Miriam's muffled voice spoke from my embrace.
"I snuck out after my chores; Mama doesn't know I am here. She thinks I have gone to the market for vegetables"
I laughed, then was concerned! "Oh, Miriam, I don't want you to get into trouble, but oh, how I have missed you". Miriam's voice and presence were a balm to my fractured soul. She shared all the family news; her storytelling was full of exaggerated mishaps, and I laughed for the first time in months. When her beautiful ramblings paused, I jumped up and pulled her to her feet.
"Let's go to the market together?" A shadow of doubt passed across her face. My heart sank. I knew she couldn't be seen with me, as she too would be shunned. I slumped down and nodded
"I know what you are thinking; I shouldn't have suggested it"
We sat holding hands. Then she got up to leave. After she had left, the house felt so empty.
I wrapped a shawl around me, picked up my basket and boldly walked out of the house, heading for the market. The market was bustling with so many people. I went to new sellers. So I wouldn't get the usual disdain. I bought figs, cheese and vegetables. I noticed the women staring at me. I heard them whispering. One woman, much louder than the other, said, "Harlot". I felt myself blush. I wrapped my shawl over my head, covering my hot cheeks, and rushed back to the safety of my home.

I threw off my shawl and dropped my bag of supplies. I flopped on the bed and began to weep. I must have cried myself to sleep, and I woke up disoriented. I slowly got out of bed, knowing I couldn't put off going to the well any longer. I took my clay jar, placed it on my head, and walked the longer route to the well, missing the marketplace. It was a mile-long walk, and it was the hottest part of the day. I chose to

go then so I could avoid the judgmental stares of the other women. I arrived at the well and noticed a man sitting with his back against the well wall. I avoided him by going to the opposite side.
As I lowered the rope and bucket, the man spoke. “Will you give me a drink?”. I looked up; his piercing brown eyes looked at me so kindly. I realised he was a Jew. I gave him the benefit of the doubt.
Maybe he hadn’t noticed that I was a Samaritan. I answered in a gentle way, “You are a Jew; I am a Samaritan. How can you ask me for a drink? You are not even supposed to be talking to me”.
Then he spoke again. “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”
This man had me baffled.
“How can you give me drink you have no bucket to draw water with?”
“Where can you get living water from?”
Oh, how I longed never to have to come to this well again. I would never have to be scorned by others. I asked the man to give me a drink of this living water. He spoke again, “Go call your husband.”
He said this is such a kind way, but it still shook me. I leant against the stone well and whispered my reply, “I have no husband.”
He spoke softly again, “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband.” I was shocked that he had known my past. I replied, “Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”
“Woman,” the man replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.
You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”
This man spoke with such authority but also humility. I spoke now a little louder. “I know that the Messiah” (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then this man, whom I now know to be called Jesus, declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”
Hope flooded my very being.
This man standing before me, breaking the law to share such beautiful news with me, was the Messiah everyone was waiting for. I asked him to stay there. I left my clay jar and ran as fast as I could back to my village. I arrived hot and exhausted. I found my voice and shouted as loud as I could, “Come see a man that told me everything I ever did.” “He is the Messiah!” I don’t know why I was so surprised, but they came back with me, and Jesus talked with them, and they started to believe too. Over the next couple of days, many of the villagers started to believe in Jesus.
I no longer have to dread going to the well. The Messiah changed the atmosphere of the whole village that day. The women include me and pour love on me when I go to the market. My life has been restored.
My family and I are working through restoration. I no longer look for love in the wrong places.
Jesus has filled me with his love.
Ang Hall

Remembrance



The medic props up a suffering man
Wounded doing his duty for Blighty,
A young man suffering severe pain.
By their side they are accompanied
By a God who has known that pain.

For Christ has felt the agony of mankind's hate
And for you suffered a cruel agonised fate.
The soldier hopefully will physically survive,
Eventually return home to family life
Make his sweetheart a happy wife.

Christ has felt that hurt the soldier endured
He did it for all so our sin was cured.
As we remember about a violent past
Honouring those who gave their all
Grow and develop our faith so it will last.

Victory

The soldiers they fight for there's a battle to be won.
Christ visits their battlefield wearing His own crown of thorns,
Bows His head and sadly sighs at the scene. He observes
The men exhibiting the opposite values of fear and bravery,
Dealing with the thought of instant death or loss of limb.
He sees bodies badly broken as His was once too,
It is well to remember for all this gloom and misery
Out of these conditions He won the most significant victory.

Dates for the Diary

October

Sat 31st Light Party St Matthew's CC 2.00-4.00pm

November

Sun 1St All Saints Day Joint Service in Stranton with Bishop Rick, marking the end of our 900th Anniversary Year 10.00am

Mon 2nd All Souls Service Stranton 7.00pm

Wed 4th Prayer Time in Stranton – All welcome 6.00pm

Sun 8th Remembrance Sunday Service Stranton 10.55 am

Mon 9th Michael Thompson's funeral Stranton 2.00pm

Mon 9th Deanery Synod at Holy Trinity, Seaton Carew 7.00pm

Sun 15th Sundays@6 Praise & Worship Stranton 6.00pm

Sat 21st BB Christmas Fayre St Matthew's CC 9.30 – 12.00noon

Sat 28th St Luke's Christmas Fayre 11.00-12.00noon
with Silver Band playing a selection of Festive songs.

December

Sat 5th Cheese, Wine & Carols by Candlelight
The Parish Centre 6.00 for 6.30pm
Tickets £7.50 inc wine (children £3) available from 01429756826

Advent Course

Preparing for the real message of Christmas and God's gift to us all
Thursday December 3rd, 10th, 17th at 7.00pm
St Luke's Church Rooms
More details to follow in notice sheets and on social media.

CELEBRATE!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!
to

November

Sally Clarke
Linda Cartwright
Sylvia Shepherd
Mike Weimer



Wedding Anniversary

John & Rebecca Bell

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.



Remembrance Sunday Service

8th November 2026
10:55 a.m.

All Saints' Stranton Church
TS24 7QT

Lord, we hold in prayer:
the sick in mind or body,
the dying,
the grieving,
those anxious for their loved ones,
those worried about the future,
those scared for their safety,
any who have lost their faith,
all in trouble or distress;
keep us safe under the shadow of your wing.



Who's Who

Church Office	St Matthew's Community Centre Arncliffe Gardens TS26 9JF
Administrator	Trish Playfor **"Tues- Fri, 9.00 to 11.00am" 01429 894006 or** 07305 550009 E-Mail: **admin@stranton-church.org.uk** Web Site: **www.stranton-church.org.uk**
To contact clergy by E-mail	E-Mail: **clergy@stranton-church.org.uk**

Priest in Charge Revd. John Bell	34A Westbourne Road	07512 481115
Email:	r**evdjohnbell@stranton-church.org.uk**	
Curate		
Revd Claire Mead	(Stranton & St Luke's)	07598 070481
Email:	**curate@stranton-church.org.uk** Usual day off – Friday	
Reader		
Mary Tones	40a Blakelock Road	07972 342890
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St Aidan's & Columba's Church **Priest in Charge**		
Revd. Becky Reeve	5 Tunstall Avenue	01429 671358
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Email:	**safeguarding@stranton-church.org.uk**	07749 163606
Churches Together in Hartlepool		
Secretary	Robert Proud : **Pastor.nlfh@hotmail.co.uk**	
Church Wardens	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.