THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

ST PAUL'S CHURCH SPENNYMOOR

Annual Report for 2025

ST PAUL'S PARISH CHURCH SPENNYMOOR
ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS 26th April 2026

1. PRAYERS – Revd. Canon Matt Tarling
2. APOLOGIES
3. ELECTION OF CHURCHWARDEN

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING
26th April 2026

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2. MINUTES OF APCM HELD 11TH MAY 2025
3. MATTERS ARISING
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   (B) DEANARY SYNOD REPRESENTITIVES
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ST PAUL'S PARISH CHURCH SPENNYMOOR
ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS 11th MAY 2025

1. PRAYERS – Revd. Canon Matt Tarling
2. APOLOGIES – Christopher Luke, Paul Simpson
3. ELECTION OF CHURCHWARDENS – Christopher Luke and Samuel Thumaty duly elected.

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING 11th MAY 2025

(a) APPOINTMENT OF SECRETARY/CLERK FOR THE MEETING – Emma Blagburn appointed

(b) MINUTES OF APCM HELD

(c) MATTERS ARISING

(d) ELECTIONS: PCC MEMBERS

9 elected members.

Thanks to those finishing – Andy Carr, Margaret Binns, John Tindale

4 spaces available for election – John Castling, Paul Simpson, Matt Killen and Sean Alder elected.

(e) APPOINTMENTS:

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER (ACCOUNTS) – KAREN WORRALL ELECTED AGAIN FOR 2025

(f) REPORT OF ELECTORAL ROLL: RESOLUTION OF PCC MEMBERS FOR 2024

COMPLETE RENEWAL – CURRENTLY 98 ON ROLL

THANKS TO JOHN CASTLING FOR HIS WORK ON THIS.

(g) TREASURERS REPORTS AND PRESENTATION OF ACCOUNTS

(h) REPORTS FROM PCC

a. SECRETARY'S REPORT OF BUSINESS OF PCC

b. PCC'S ANNUAL REPORT ON SAFEGUARDING

The PCC has given due attention to safeguarding in 2024

c. CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

d. DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

e. CHURCHES TOGETHER

(i) REPORTS FROM CHURCH ORGANISATIONS

(j) VICAR'S REPORT

(k) CURATES REPORT

(l) QUESTION TIME

No questions.

(m) CLOSING PRAYER & GRACE

REPORTS FROM THE PCC

Treasurer's Report and Presentation of Accounts 2025

I am pleased to present the financial accounts for St Paul's Church Spennymoor for the year ended 31 December 2025. Once again, I must express my continued gratitude to Julie Simpson and Christina Potts for their hard work on our payments and bookkeeping over the past year.

As noted when I spoke at our Giving Sunday service last month, the accounts show a deficit for the year on "ordinary" activities of approximately £7,000, up from a deficit of approximately £5,000 in the year to 31 December 2024. While our income rose in comparative terms, unfortunately our costs increased faster – a consequence of both rising costs generally and the initial exploratory fees for the major repairs due in 2026 (see below). As you will note from the accounts, a relatively small portion of our expenditure is attributable to controllable ministry costs, though I am keen to increase this proportion over time.

Looking forward in 2026, the PCC is expecting to press ahead with phase 2 of the building fabric repairs, the

external stonework refurbishment, likely over the summer months. Phase 1, the replacement of the kitchen vestry roof, was completed before Christmas and paid earlier in 2026. The combined cost will be in the region of £60,000. While we have requests for grant funding pending, it is likely that a significant proportion of this cost will need to be met from our financial reserves. Of course, the less we need to commit out of reserves, the more we will be able to use for more exciting options to improve our building to better equip our ministries! We have also informed the Diocese that we will reduce our parish share payments this year, hoping this will need only be a temporary measure.

Therefore, I would take this opportunity again to encourage all of us who call this church family their own, and who share our common mission to "Believe the good news, worship Jesus and share his love", to prayerfully and regularly review our personal giving. Specifically, may I commend to you the concept of "tithing", meaning the setting aside of the first 10% of your income for the upkeep and advance of God's work in the local church and other charitable causes. Tithing has been the normal and traditional practice of

the church throughout history and across the world. By doing this, we acknowledge that all we have comes from the Lord and we mirror something of God's own generosity to us in giving us his Spirit as the "firstfruits", a guarantee of the eternal life to come. Not everyone can do this of course as our circumstances differ, but we can all prayerfully consider whether we can work towards it over time. Finally, we must always remember that our giving must be done out of thankfulness to our generous God, never under compulsion; there is therefore no room for either pride or guilt in the amount we choose to give.

As always, I would be delighted to answer any questions on our church finances or giving. Please speak to me on a Sunday morning or send me an email using treasurer@stpaulsspennymoor.co.uk.

Matt Killen

PCC Secretary Annual Report

The vision to believe the Good News, worship Jesus and share his love continued to develop during last year. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) support this vision wholeheartedly.

2025 was another busy year for the PCC which continued to meet regularly throughout the year, along with the Standing Committee. A total of 6 PCC meetings and 4 Standing Committee meetings took place throughout the year. During these meetings reflection takes place on various reports received regarding such things as finance, safeguarding and the care and maintenance of the church building.

This year has been particularly important for discussions related to the fabric of the building, which has included repairs to the roof of the kitchen are, and repairs required to the stonework. Discussions also took place around access in and around the interior of the church to which end a decision was made to purchase a portable ramp to improve access to the Chancel area. Another important area discussed during the year was safeguarding and safe recruitment of volunteers.

The year was also a time of change for the PCC as the previous secretary relinquished the post for personal reasons. My thanks go out to Emma for all the hard work she put in during her tenure as Secretary. I would also like to express my thanks to Rev. Matt Tarling for the help and support he has given me during this transitionary period. Thanks also go to the Finance team for all their work throughout the years as well as the Church Wardens and Deputy Wardens, without whom the Church could not function so effectively.

PCC Members after APCM 2025

Sean Alder, John Castling, Emma Blagburn, Sandra Clayton, Deborah Humphreys, Matt Killen, Christopher Luke, Samuel Thumaty, Lesley Parratt, Helen Raine, Paul Simpson, Kate Tarling, Rev. Matt Tarling, Rev Lee Trevorrow-Earl, Kim Wanless, Liz Warne

Sean Alder, PCC Secretary

PCC's Annual Report on Safeguarding

All necessary Dbs checks - both new posts and 3 year renewals ,have been completed or in the process of being verified.

From November the Disclosure and Barring Service have made slight changes to the way documents are verified. Records of which documents were verified now need to be made and kept for 2 years.

Almost everyone has completed or renewed their relevant training.

In August I was informed by the administrators of our Dbs checks that there had been a cyber attack.This affected some of St.Paul's Dbs applicants and they were offered 'a free of charge credit monitoring voucher with Experians Identity plus ' through the Church of England.

The Parish dashboard and Hub continue to be updated regularly.

We are currently working on our Safer recruitment and People Management.

Lesley Riddle, Parish Safeguarding Officer

Churchwardens' Report 2025

The fabric of the church building generally remained in good order along with church plate, though we did need to replace glass Holy Communion cruets due to two cracking at various points during the year. All other silverware remains in good condition. Annual servicing and maintenance took place as normal. The annual parish statistics and environmental returns were completed and submitted as is required. Our church insurer Ecclesiastical Insurance requested a telephone survey as part of their ongoing support to churches. Samuel and I both took part in this call which discussed many different areas relating to the building, safety, and our responsibilities to manage risk.

In the autumn of 2025, we facilitated a Parish Inspection by the Venerable Rick Simpson, Archdeacon of Auckland which was designed to see how many works highlighted in the Quinquennial Inspection report are progressing and to check parish records. Rick was satisfied with documentation and information presented and it gave us an opportunity to discuss with him the stonemasonry works which were highlighted in the QI report.

Last year saw significant progress to formulate a plan to address the stonemasonry works highlighted in the 2022 QI report. Hugh Massey Architects were

contracted to project manage which included a tendering process. Following this tendering process a contractor was appointed to undertake the stonemasonry works which are scheduled for late spring 2026.

Hugh Massey Architects were also contracted to project manage the roof repairs for the west end back (kitchen) vestry. A tender process took place and the works were completed in October 2025. Additional remedial works were subsequently needed as the replacement roof did not fully solve water ingress and small stonemasonry coping joints were sealed which has corrected the issue.

Some interior damage to plaster was identified which is largely a result of stonemasonry repairs required to the exterior of the building. Remedial works to these issues will be addressed following the exterior stonework.

In our previous report, we mentioned the damage sustained to the perimeter stone wall in late 2024. This was caused by local school children climbing over the wall, resulting in loose and damaged stones. Spennymoor Town Council inspected the site, appointed a contractor, and the repairs were completed in early 2025.

We would like to extend our thanks to those who have contributed so much over the past year to support us including deputy wardens, Deborah Humphreys and Paul Simpson, and to Averre Cleary for her ongoing support at Wednesday Holy Communion services and the Play Church team on Fridays. Some of our younger church members continued to help out pre and post Sunday services and we thank them for serving in this way.

Christopher Luke and Samuel Thumaty

Churchwardens

Curates Report 2025

When I look back on the past year, first and foremost, I would say it has been a year of immense privilege.

It was an incredible moment for me to be priested in July at Durham Cathedral, alongside friends and colleagues I trained with, and with the smiling faces of many of you in the front rows—something I will never forget.

It was also a profoundly memorable moment to preside for the first time at both Whitworth and St Paul's, among two congregations I have grown very

fond of. It was especially meaningful to have my mum and my close friend Emma there as well. I cannot fully express how beautiful and humbling that was.

I continue to be struck by the wonder of Holy Communion each time I say:

“The body of Christ, broken for you.”

My prayer is that I would continue to live and serve in that awe and wonder, together with you all.

At the same time, this year has also been one of significant challenge—both personally and for us as a church family.

In particular, it was a deeply concerning time when Matt’s daughter was hospitalised, and Matt needed to step back from ministry. This was especially difficult for Matt and his family, whom we held in prayer.

Nevertheless, I found it incredibly inspiring to witness how both churches came together—both in practical ways, sustaining the life of our communities, and in the care and support shown to Matt and his family.

Since then, it has been so encouraging to see Zoe’s recovery and the way God has been at work. It has reminded me of the strength, compassion, and

faithfulness that exist within this church community—and ultimately flow from the very heart of God.

Since September, I have also faced personal challenges alongside my family, as we have supported my daughter through significant struggles with her mental health. This led to her being hospitalised, and to my decision to step back from ministry for a time to prioritise our wellbeing.

This was a demanding season, with many hours spent travelling to and from the ward. I remain deeply grateful for your prayers and the many messages of love and support.

Following Asia's discharge, I have begun to resume my ministerial responsibilities. I have greatly missed being more fully involved in the life of the church and in the work I believe God has called me to. Although returning initially felt daunting, I now have a renewed sense of confidence and a growing awareness of God's leading as I step back into ministry.

As I look ahead to this next year of my curacy, I do so with hope and anticipation. I look forward to taking my first wedding, becoming more involved in our Eco Church group, and continuing to serve and lead at

Whitworth and St Paul's in a variety of different and rewarding ways, as well as within the wider community.

I look forward to all that God has in store for us as we continue to seek him together.

Revd. Lee Trevorrow-Earl

Deanery Synod

"To bless our communities in Jesus' name for the transformation of us all"
The Diocese of Durham

The year 2025 has been one of steady growth, reflection, and faithful service across the Deanery, as we have continued to respond to the Diocesan priorities together.

In February 2025, Revd Barbara Hilton took on the role of Interim Area Dean. We are deeply grateful to her for stepping into this position with generosity and care, offering wise and steady leadership during this time.

We also wish to express our sincere thanks to Revd Frances Cooper for her years of faithful service as Treasurer. Her commitment, diligence, and careful stewardship have been a real blessing to the Deanery,

and we are thankful for all she has given over this time, and Sarah Phelps as Lay Chair.

Throughout the year, we have valued opportunities to gather, learn, and be encouraged. We were pleased to welcome a number of speakers who have enriched our shared life, including Annwen Stone, who guided us in reflecting on Thy Kingdom Come and effective prayer; Revd Alistair Prince, who spoke on vocations and helped us to consider how we nurture and respond to God's calling; and Revd Nicky Chater, who deepened our awareness and understanding of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller(GRT) communities.

We also give thanks for the mission grants that have been awarded across the Deanery. These have quietly but meaningfully supported parishes in their local contexts enabling outreach, encouraging new initiatives, and strengthening ongoing ministry. It has been encouraging to see the difference these have made in the life of our communities.

As a Deanery, we continue to look ahead with hope. Plans are beginning to take shape for our first Auckland Deanery Away Day in 2026, which we hope will offer space for reflection, encouragement, and shared vision.

The coming year will also mark the start of a new triennium for Deanery representatives. We take this opportunity to give heartfelt thanks to all who have served so faithfully. Their time, commitment, and prayerful support have been deeply valued.

As we reflect on the past year and look forward, we are reminded of the words from

1 Corinthians 3:6–7:

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow."

We move forward with gratitude for all that has been, and with trust in God's continued guidance and gentle growth among us in the year ahead.

Emma Blagburn

Churches Acting Together

The year 2025 has been one of gentle growth, collaboration, and shared purpose as

we have continued to walk together in serving our local communities.

During the year, we made the transition from Churches Together to Churches Acting Together, aligning ourselves with Northeast Churches Acting Together. This change reflects a desire not only to be united in name, but also in action, as we seek to live out our shared calling in practical and visible ways.

We have been encouraged by the continued opportunities to gather and support one another through shared events across our local churches. These moments of coming together have strengthened relationships and deepened our sense of community.

A particular highlight was our involvement in the local Gala, where we hosted a stall and created bug hotels. This provided a simple but meaningful way to engage with the wider community, offering space for conversation, creativity, and connection. Our care for the environment has also been expressed through our November environmental gathering and litter pick, a small but important act of stewardship that brought people together in looking after our local area.

During the Christmas season, we shared in the joy of carol singing in Asda and Wetherspoons, bringing a sense of warmth, familiarity, and celebration into everyday spaces within our community. With monies raised donated to Crisis.

This year has also seen the introduction of new social media platforms, with the launch of Facebook and Instagram pages. These offer gentle ways to stay connected, share news, and highlight the life of our churches and the work taking place across our communities.

As we continue forward, we seek to encourage one another in supporting both our individual churches and our shared mission. Each contribution, however small, plays a part in building stronger, more connected communities. We hope to have more collaborative events where we can bring the larger community together.

As we reflect on this shared journey, we are reminded of the words from Ecclesiastes 4:9–10:

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.”

We give thanks for all that has been shared and achieved this year and look ahead with hope as we continue to grow together in unity, service, and care.

Emma Blagburn

REPORTS FROM CHURCH ORGANISATIONS FOR 2025

Trekkers

Our numbers have dropped this year. We have worked on the Storybook Bible and Beginners Bible. We had Messy Easter which was a success with children from the creche, trekkers and the community. We welcomed record numbers of families. We joined Trinity Methodist for a 3 day Holiday club which was very successful again. It was held in July during the school summer holidays, it was hard work but good. The year ended with 2 Christingle services at 4pm and 6pm. Finally, it goes without saying a big thank you to to all who are involved in Trekkers, Kate,Leslie and Jean for all the work they do.

Norma Downs

Creche

Creche is for children up to 4 years old and takes place weekly during Sunday services, except for the first Sunday of the month (our All Together service). Each week focuses on a different story or theme and, where possible, links with what is being covered in Trekkers. This year, we have used the Beginner's Bible to explore the beginning of the Old Testament, the events of Holy Week, the life of the early church and different individuals' experiences of prayer. We have also explored the Psalms through a range of children's books by Sally Lloyd-Jones. There are regularly between three and six children and they are served by a team of five volunteer leaders. It is a joy to help the youngest members of our church community begin their journey of learning about God's love for them through Bible stories, songs, craft activities, prayers and playing together week by week. We are so grateful to God for the wonderful team of volunteers who help these little bundles of energy have a great start in church life. Thank you so much for all your help :)

Christina Castling

Play Church

Playchurch runs every Friday during term time. It is a place for preschoolers and their carers to be safe, have fun and learn about Jesus. We have crafts, stories, and songs related to the bible story we are reading that week. Our average weekly attendance is around 12 children and 16 adults. It seems to be going from strength to strength and we always have new people coming in.

Deborah Humphreys

Mothers' Union

At present, we have 22 members of St. Paul's Mothers' Union, but if anyone else would like to join us, they would be most welcome, men included. MU has changed over the years and we now welcome women who are not mothers as well as men. My husband, Ken, is an Atlas member. This means they pay £10.00 per year and can attend meetings but don't receive the Newsletter.

2025 was quite a busy year but this year will be busier still as we celebrate our 150th Anniversary since Mary Sumner created Mothers' Union. Our year always begins in February, due to expected bad weather and

dark days in January. Matt celebrates Holy Communion with us and I give a Report. We've had various speakers throughout the year who have talked about Domestic Abuse (high on our Agenda), work in Kenya, and insight to being a Magistrate, Fire Safety (which was open to all), and our own Lesley Parratt on archeological finds. As well as Speakers, we attended a Lady Day Service at St. Andrew's Church and the World Day of Prayer also at St. Andrew's, which last year it was prepared by the women of the Cook Islands. This year it was prepared by the Palestinian women and held at St. Charles R. C. Church. We also attended a Service in Durham Cathedral where we prayed for our Indoor Members who can no longer come to meetings due to ill health.

Also in Durham Cathedral we hold our annual Festival where all the Banners are paraded down the central Isle. A wonderful sight to see. In July and December we usually go for a meal instead of having a meeting, and August is our holiday month.We also hold a Coffee Morning once a year where the money goes to Overseas MU. As well as that we help the Women's Refuge at Bishop Auckland and pray for them regularly

You shall have to wait for the Report for next year to see what our 150th year looks like, or, you can join us on the journey and become a member of M.U.

Thank you

June Wilson – MU Branch Chair

Music at St Paul's

Our singers and musicians continued to support us in our sung worship each week throughout 2025. The choir rehearse on (some) Thursday mornings, the musicians rehearse on Sunday mornings, and once a term we meet for a joint evening rehearsal. This shared time together helps to unify our efforts to serve as one team - and it's usually good fun too!

New songs that were introduced into our services over 2025 include: a sung version of the "Apostles' Creed" (released by Emu Music), "Christ our Hope in Life and Death" (by Gettys/Matt Papa), and "His Glory and My Good" (released by City Alight). As usual, the choir and musicians also prepared items for Holy Week, Remembrance Sunday and the Carol Service - my hope is that these songs provide moments of stillness where the congregation can reflect on the words being sung.

My role as musical director also includes co-ordinating the band for our Holiday Club. It's been brilliant to see some of our teenagers come into their own as they've played in that band over the last 2 years, and it's a privilege to be leading so many children in singing truths about our wonderful God.

We would always welcome new people (of any age) to join us, so do please consider it, if you have a talent to share! In particular, we have a very small pool of musicians, so it would be a blessing to us all to have a few extra people helping out.

Many thanks to all who serve in our music ministry, and also to the Tech Team - much of what they do is unseen but it is what allows everyone to hear our music during services, and to see the words for singing along. As we at St Paul's join in here with the eternal heavenly song around God's throne, may our singing encourage and equip us, and be all to God's glory.

Meghan Killen

Flower Arrangers

Another easy year with not many weddings. We had our usual Easter, Harvest and Christmas flowers. Flowers are maintained weekly and we try to do our best. We would welcome anyone who would like to join the team, no experience is needed. I thank the team for all their help throughout the year and the people who give donations, as without them church flowers would not exist.

Norma Downs

Ladies At St. Paul's

After 8 came to a natural end as a group with the last one being in July 2024 Our last contribution to the church was painting chairs to go under bell tower.

We have had some great fun, built friendships and doing activities together, learning new things.

We wanted to relaunch and try to build on what After 8 started so we now have a new group called Ladies at St Paul's which launched in January 2025 with a pudding evening.

So far, we have we have had a quiz night, celebrated International Women's Day and done a Chocolate Egg event where a professional chocolatier came and showed us how to decorate an egg with daffodil fondant.

There is a full calendar up to December and we have incorporated our annual spring clean at church into the programme which is our next ladies evening.

Kim Wanless

Press and Communications

In 2025 our press and communications outreach remained focused around the church newsletter, Crossways, on social media and in the local Spennymoor News publication.

Crossways continued with a print run of less than 200 copies but it remained a vital link to members of our parish, some of whom were not able to access our digital communications, like social media. The newsletter ensures that people are able to find out what is happening in the parish as well as getting a Christian message through the articles prepared by Revd Canon Matt Tarling and Revd Lee Earl. I'm grateful to Pauline Storey, Brenda Crooks and the

distributors who print, sort and deliver the publication each month.

Our digital ministry continued across and Facebook with live-streamed Sunday, Holy Week and Christmas services available via the latter. The Durham Diocese and national Church of England communications team occasionally picked up our posts and shared with wider audiences online. We remained on X (formally Twitter), but we stopped posting content on that platform in early 2025, prioritising Facebook and Instagram.

In early December, some 6,000 homes in the parish received a Christmas postcard with details of services, along with scripture and a short Christmas message and we're aware that people attended Christmas services having found out via the postcard. My thanks to Matt Killen for coordinating the distribution and to the volunteers who delivered the cards.

The tech desk operates with a small team on a rota basis and I thank them for their continued service in this area in 2025.

Christopher Luke

SPY and SPY+

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."
— **Matthew 19:14**

Jesus clearly affirmed the value and place of children in the Kingdom of God. At **St. Paul's**, we continue to cherish the presence and participation of children and young people in the life of our church. We are blessed to be an intergenerational community where people of all ages are growing together in faith.

Over the past year, we have continued to develop our children and youth ministry with a focus on inclusion, discipleship, and spiritual growth.

SPY+

SPY+ has thrived in 2025, following a monthly plan designed to engage young people in worship, discipleship, and fellowship:

- **Two Sundays each month in church**, where young people participate fully listening to the word, following the liturgy, and serving.
- **One Sunday in the St. Paul's Centre**, where they enjoy snacks and hot chocolate while engaging in deep, honest conversations about faith.

- **One Sunday in the All Together Service**, celebrating our church family as one body.

The **SPY+ "cool row"** continues to give our young people a sense of identity and belonging within the church. Over the year, they've grown in confidence and are now much more at ease discussing big theological questions. It's been encouraging to see their understanding deepen and their personal faith develop in visible ways.

SPY

SPY has continued to meet monthly throughout 2025, providing a consistent and welcoming space for our secondary school-aged young people to grow in faith and friendship. We've enjoyed a range of fun trips and social events, including bowling, beach outings, and a Christmas party, which have helped build strong relationships within the group.

Alongside the fun, our young people have been engaging more deeply with their faith, taking time to explore big theological questions and discussing what it means to follow Jesus in today's world. Their confidence and understanding continue to grow, and it's been a joy to see them reflect thoughtfully and openly on issues of faith, identity, and discipleship.

We're grateful for each member of the group and for the leaders who support and guide them. SPY remains a vital and life-giving part of our church's ministry to young people.

Samuel Thumaty

Homegroups

The year 2025 has seen steady engagement and growth across the home groups in both St Paul's and Whitworth churches. Nearly half of our church members participate in or are a part of our weekly Homegroups, demonstrating the importance and reach of these fellowship opportunities within our church community. However, we still struggle with some of our members being unable to participate regularly due to ill health, shift patterns, etc. Some of our groups continued to use the Zoom link to connect with those who were unable to make it in person.

Our Homegroup leaders have played a pivotal role in supporting spiritual development and fostering community. While reflecting on the past year, home group leaders expressed their keen interest in developing strategies to help groups pray together

more effectively, providing tools to create a distinct group vision aligned with the overall church vision, and offering ideas to encourage openness and sharing within groups. Addressing these needs will help our groups further strengthen their impact in enabling their members to grow closer to Jesus and to one another.

During the year, we reflected on the three vision statements of our church: Believing the Good News, Worshipping Jesus, and Sharing His Love, together with the five mission statements. In addition, we conducted a focused study on the advent of Jesus Christ and His anticipated second coming. We emphasised the importance of being prepared to receive our King upon His return.

Our studies also included a book-led study of the life and ministry of Elijah, a prominent prophet called by God during a period marked by widespread sin, moral decay among leaders, and pervasive idolatry. Elijah served as a vessel through whom God's glory, power, and might were revealed, ultimately calling people to repentance and guiding the nation back to God.

We also participated in a video-led Bible study on the Lord's Prayer, which invigorated our members to pray and intercede for one another.

Looking ahead, the focus will be on equipping our leaders with practical resources, nurturing group vision, and encouraging participation. Strengthening these areas will support our mission to be a welcoming, vibrant church community. We extend our thanks to all leaders and members for their dedication and commitment throughout the year and look forward to continued growth and unity in the coming months to the glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is forever praised. Amen.

Samuel Thumaty

Grow at St Paul's

From the launch in 2016, the community garden in the churchyard has moved on in leaps and bounds. The four raised beds and the large bed planted with fruit trees and bushes are all well established and they provide a substantial harvest.

Shirley Taphouse and her family again planted vegetables in the raised beds and dealt with weeding

and general maintenance of the growing area. We warmly thank them for their work throughout the year and the garden project would be much poorer without their help.

The congregation at St. Pauls, plus the cafe in the centre as well as the foodbank all benefitted from the produce grown on site.

The most popular and well attended activities in the Autumn and Winter 2025 period were the wreath making sessions.

The Grow at St. Paul's committee will meet in Spring 2026 to plan for the growing season.

Pauline Storey

Environmental Group

The Environmental Group started off well and achieved the Bronze Award. The original team was Emma, June, Paul, Linda and Lesley. Emma was our lead and as her mother was ill, the meetings didn't happen. We had the one meeting last year at Emma's where we planned the Litter Pick. We didn't get many people along to it but managed to fill 2 good bags with litter from just around St. Paul's Church. The walk to Whitworth Church was cancelled. As Emma was

involved with Churches Together, it was hoped that she could bring them on board but I don't know how that would affect receiving the Awards. We have spoken with someone from St. Stephen's Church, Willington who have achieved their Gold Award. They said that the Silver Award was not too bad to achieve but the Gold Award is much harder.

Whitworth Church have decided to have another effort at running these meetings, thanks to Lee. At present Lee, myself and Linda make up the group. If anyone else would like to be involved, please do come along.

June Wilson

Prayer for Growth

Prayer for Growth is a monthly time of worship during which we reflect on the Bible, sing hymns and songs and give plenty of time to pray. The focus on 'Growth' acknowledges that there are lots of ways in which growth can happen. The gospel is intended to have a transforming effect on lives as people grow in their knowledge and love of Jesus. Such growth leads to the sharing of our faith and the invitation of others to

discover Jesus. So growth in faith leads to growth in the number of those in our community encountering the love of Jesus. Our gatherings are consistently attended by a small number of people, there is always plenty of room for more. We don't expect people to pray out loud or share any personal concerns, we find a way for everyone to pray in their own way. The main thing is that we pray!

Revd. Canon Matt Tarling

All Together Services

The All Together service was established in May 2023 as a new way of enabling all to worship together. It is not designed as a children's service in the way that Playchurch functions, rather it is a format that intends us to worship 'intergenerationally'. What that fancy language means is that we worship together across a variety of differences including age, but also different styles of learning and different ways of engaging with prayer and music.

The All Together team continues to grow in the skill of developing services. We have welcomed a number of

new families and individuals to this service, it has been particularly encouraging to see baptism families welcomed in this context. This has included those who find our more formal services quite alien and difficult to opt into. We see more people stay around to chat afterward services and whole families are able to worship together.

There are challenges with this kind of worship as it is often easier to separate children from adults as we do on other weeks. It is also a lot more hard work planning services of this type as our formal services often follow a fairly routine pattern. As the All Together services are coming up to 3 years old in 2026 we are in a review process to learn from experiences so far.

Revd. Canon Matt Tarling

Family Events

2025 saw us hosting another successful Messy Easter event for families with craft activities, fun and food for about 50 children. These events have been really valuable for building relationships with families and the

hope is that as people feel welcomed in our church, they will want to know more about Jesus. We always encourage families to come along to our All Together services and our summer Holiday Club so that they can do just that. Our Superheroes Holiday club in the summer was such a privilege to run. Around 80 children over the course of 3 full days found out about our true Superhero Jesus, sharing fun, drama, games, dancing, singing, crafts and lots more. We also had a Youth chocolate event one evening with a short talk about faith which was enjoyed by the 40 or so yound people that came. We were so thankful to the amazing bunch of adults and junior team from churches in Spennymoor that volunteered for the three days so that Holiday Club could be such a success.

Christmas saw us hosting our Relaxed Christmas service again for those that find a busy Christingle a bit overwhelming. We have a number of families who really appreciate this service each year as somewhere their children with additional needs can come and feel relaxed and welcomed. And then of course the two Christingle services provided families in our community with a wonderful opportunity to hear the Christmas story and celebrate together. This service is an annual

tradition for a lot of families in our town. Let's continue to pray that this love of tradition would build into a love for the Jesus they hear spoken about.

It shouldn't be underestimated how much planning and hard work goes into running these events. We are always looking for people who are keen to serve with us, so do let us know if you would like to be involved in the future! It has been wonderful as always to see the church full of families eager to participate and engage. Please continue to pray that we would do a good job of building relationships with these families and that God would be working in them to draw them closer to him.

Kate Tarling