

Charity registration number 01130847 (England and Wales)

**THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S  
ANNUAL REPORT AND UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025**

# THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S

## LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

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<b>The Incumbent</b>	The Rev. Matthew Strand
<b>Charity number</b>	01130847
<b>Principal address</b>	Church Chare Chester-le-Street County Durham DH3 3QB
<b>Independent examiner</b>	David McFarlane (ACA) DMC North Accounting Services A1 Marquis Court Team Valley Trading Estate Gateshead NE11 0RU
<b>Bankers</b>	Barclays Bank PLC 6/7 Market Place County Durham DH1 3ND

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# **THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S**

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# **THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S**

## **COUNCIL MEMBERS REPORT**

### ***FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025***

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The trustees present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2025.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's governing document, the Charities Act 2011 and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)".

#### **Objectives and activities**

St Mary and St Cuthbert's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has responsibility for co-operating with the incumbent, Revd Matthew Strand, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has maintenance responsibilities of the Church Centre complex of the Parish Church of St Mary and St Cuthbert, Chester-le-Street. Correspondence may be addressed to the Church Office, Parish Centre, Church Chare, Chester-le-Street, Co Durham, DH3 3QB.

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our parish community. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how our services can improve the many groups that live within our parish. Our services can involve the many groups that live within our parish. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.

The PCC is governed by the Church of England measures which comprise of 1) the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 as amended and 2) the Church Representation Rules (contained in schedule 3 to the Synodical Government Measure 1969 as amended).

When planning our activities for the year, the incumbent and the PCC have considered the Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. We have described some of the activities we have undertaken to fulfill our objectives below.

#### **Achievements and performance**

We aim to give away 5% of the congregation's giving from the previous year and we have achieved that goal - to the agreed charities/mission agencies - local, national and international.

The church's ministry is guided by our vision to be: "A multi-generational church that makes life long disciples of Jesus, where everyone flourishes" and values: "Christ Focussed, Generous Hospitality, Growing Together".

#### **Church attendance**

A new electoral roll is being prepared for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting being held on 27th April, 7.30pm.



# **THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S**

## **COUNCIL MEMBERS REPORT (CONTINUED)**

### **FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025**

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#### **Financial review**

The general, unrestricted income of the PCC in 2025 was £289,299 compared to unrestricted income in 2024 of £282,760.

The organ restoration fund balance stood at £5,510 at the year end. This is restricted towards the repairs and restoration of the organ, and much of the work was undertaken during 2019.

As regards unrestricted expenditure, £121,272 Parish Share has been paid over during the year compared with £115,500 in 2024. Overall, the excess of ordinary unrestricted expenditure over income gave rise to a deficit for the year on unrestricted funds of £43,397 compared to a deficit of £47,620 in 2024.

The policy of the PCC is to maintain a minimum cash reserve within its unrestricted funds of £10,000, to enable it to manage the church's normal expenditure requirements. Year end unrestricted bank balances total £13,863. Restricted funds are held until such time as expenditure arises for which they may be used in accordance with the restrictions placed upon their use. There are plans in place to ensure the unrestricted bank balance is in accordance with the policy by the end of 2026.

There has been one legacy in the year totalling £1,000 which was unrestricted in nature.

#### **Risk Factors**

The Council members has assessed the major risks to which the PCC is exposed, and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks.

In relation to the management of the major risks that have the potential to adversely affect the work of the church, these are considered by the relevant sub-committees and issues are raised at Council meetings where action is necessary. A formal policy for the protection of children and vulnerable adults has been put in place by the PCC and, in accordance with its terms, the necessary DBS searches are made through diocesan channels.

The Standing Committee on behalf of the PCC is responsible for health and safety and maintenance issues within the Parish Centre.

The Standing Committee is responsible for the initial management on behalf of the PCC of financial risks. The same Committee also manages health and safety and maintenance issues within the church building and for compliance with the 5 yearly programme of inspection required of church buildings by the Church of England central authorities. The quinquennial survey was carried out in 2023 and therefore the next report is due in 2028.

This survey covered the general condition of the church, and the recommended time frame for improvements. The area of most concern is the failed boiler which requires immediate action.

#### **Structure, governance and management**

The PCC is governed by the Church of England measures which comprise of 1) the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 as amended and 2) the Church Representation Rules (contained in schedule 3 to the Synodical Government Measure 1969 as amended) .

# THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S

## COUNCIL MEMBERS REPORT (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

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Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules, or may be co-opted.

During the year the following served as members of the PCC:

*Clergy (ex officio):*

Rev Matt Strand, Rector

Rev Miriam Wakefield, Curate

*Church Wardens (ex officio):*

Brian Armstrong

Sue Begg

Dorothy Hall

*Treasurer:*

Mr Malcolm Austin

*Deanery Synod Representatives (ex officio):*

Alex Nelson (elected 2023)

Rachael Orr (elected 2024)

Peter Southern (elected 2024)

Paul Vincent (elected 2025)

June Austin (elected 2025)

*Elected and Co-opted Members:*

Edna Sanderson (3<sup>rd</sup> year of 2<sup>nd</sup> term)

Tom Appleby (3<sup>rd</sup> year of 2<sup>nd</sup> term)

Sharon Dodds (2<sup>nd</sup> year of 2<sup>nd</sup> term)

James Hall (2<sup>nd</sup> year of 2<sup>nd</sup> term)

Abbie Winter (1<sup>st</sup> year of 2<sup>nd</sup> term)

Will Hoy (1<sup>st</sup> year of 1<sup>st</sup> term)

Jan Rowland (1<sup>st</sup> year of 1<sup>st</sup> term)

Sharon Pritchard (1<sup>st</sup> year of 1<sup>st</sup> term)

Kathryn Brown (3<sup>rd</sup> year of 1<sup>st</sup> term)

Norma Hedley (2<sup>nd</sup> year of 1<sup>st</sup> term)

Elaine Rayner (1<sup>st</sup> year of 1<sup>st</sup> term)

### Committees

Our Parochial Church Council met six times through the year as usual.

Standing Committee: This is the only committee required by law.

It has power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council. Attends to the Financial concerns of the Parish and the Fabric of the Church.

The Council members report was approved by the Board of Council Members.



Rev Matthew strand

Trustee

Dated: 27/4/26



# THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S

## INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

### TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S

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I report to the trustees on my examination of the financial statements of The Parochial Church of St Mary's & St Cuthbert's (the charity) for the year ended 31 December 2025.

#### Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charity you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's financial statements carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011. In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act 2011.

#### Independent examiner's statement

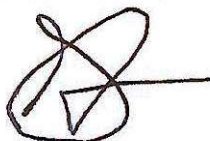
Since the charity's gross income exceeded £250,000, the independent examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the Charities Act 2011. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of ICAEW, which is one of the listed bodies.

Your attention is drawn to the fact that the charity has prepared the financial statements in accordance with the relevant version of the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) in preference to the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued on 1 April 2005 which is referred to in the extant regulations but has now been withdrawn. I understand that this has been done in order for the financial statements to provide a true and fair view in accordance with UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1 accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Charities Act 2011.
- 2 the financial statements do not accord with those records; or
- 3 the financial statements do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of financial statements set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the financial statements give a true and fair view, which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.



David McFarlane (ACA)  
A1 Marquis Court  
Team Valley Trading Estate  
Gateshead  
NE11 0RU

Dated: 29/4/26

# THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

	Notes	Unrestricted Endowment funds	2025	£	Unrestricted Endowment funds Fixed Assets	2025	£	Restricted Endowment funds	2025	£	Unrestricted Endowment funds	2024	£	Restricted Endowment funds	2024	£	Unrestricted Endowment funds Fixed Assets	2024	£	Restricted Endowment funds general	2024	£	Total	2024	£
<b>Income and endowments from:</b>																									
Donations and legacies	2	156,874			-			54,975			-			-			-			-			288,910		
Charitable activities	3	25,695			-			-			-			-			-			-			26,680		
Other trading activities	4	104,604			-			-			-			-			-			-			95,142		
Investments	5	1,555			-			4,756			-			-			-			-			10,480		
Other income	6	571			-			-			-			-			-			-			1,274		
<b>Total income</b>		<b>289,299</b>			<b>-</b>			<b>59,731</b>			<b>-</b>			<b>282,760</b>			<b>-</b>			<b>-</b>			<b>422,486</b>		
<b>Expenditure on:</b>																									
Raising funds	7	75,404			-			-			-			67,531			-			-			67,531		
Charitable activities	8	257,292			4,064			39,498			-			262,849			4,660			-			311,322		
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>332,696</b>			<b>4,064</b>			<b>39,498</b>			<b>-</b>			<b>330,380</b>			<b>4,660</b>			<b>-</b>			<b>378,853</b>		
Net gains/(losses) on investments		-			-			-			1,006			-			-			148			148		
<b>Net income/(expenditure)</b>		<b>(43,397)</b>			<b>(4,064)</b>			<b>20,233</b>			<b>1,006</b>			<b>(47,620)</b>			<b>(4,660)</b>			<b>95,913</b>			<b>43,781</b>		
Transfers between funds		32,286			8,323			(40,609)			-			(212)			9,277			(9,064)			1		
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		<b>(11,111)</b>			<b>4,259</b>			<b>(20,376)</b>			<b>1,006</b>			<b>(47,832)</b>			<b>4,617</b>			<b>86,849</b>			<b>43,782</b>		



**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025**

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.



# THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S

## BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2025

	Notes	2025 £	£	2024 £	£
<b>Fixed assets</b>					
Tangible assets	12		489,942		487,268
Investments	13		6,810		5,804
			<u>496,752</u>		<u>493,072</u>
<b>Current assets</b>					
Stocks	14	60		60	
Debtors	15	22,650		22,950	
Cash at bank and in hand		157,557		196,167	
		<u>180,267</u>		<u>219,177</u>	
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	16	(5,841)		(14,849)	
Net current assets			<u>174,426</u>		<u>204,328</u>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>			<u><u>671,178</u></u>		<u><u>697,400</u></u>
<b>Capital funds</b>					
Endowment funds - general			6,810		5,804
<b>Income funds</b>					
Restricted funds			593,955		614,331
Endowment funds -			30,660		26,401
Unrestricted funds			39,753		50,864
			<u><u>671,178</u></u>		<u><u>697,400</u></u>

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 27/4/26

  
The Rev'd Matthew Strand  
Trustee

# THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025**

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### **1 Accounting policies**

#### **Charity information**

The Parochial Church of St Mary's & St Cuthbert's is governed by the Church of England measures which comprise of 1) the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 as amended and 2) the Church Representation Rules (contained in schedule 3 to the Synodical Government Measure 1969 as amended)

#### **1.1 Accounting convention**

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the charity's governing document, the Charities Act 2011, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and the Charities SORP "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)". The charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The charity has taken advantage of the provisions in the SORP for charities not to prepare a statement of cash flows.

The financial statements have departed from the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 only to the extent required to provide a true and fair view. This departure has involved following the Statement of Recommended Practice for charities applying FRS 102 rather than the version of the Statement of Recommended Practice which is referred to in the Regulations but which has since been withdrawn.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

#### **1.2 Going concern**

At the time of approving the financial statements, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

#### **1.3 Charitable funds**

General funds represent the funds of the PCC that are not subject to any restrictions regarding their use and are available for application on the general purposes of the PCC. Funds designated for a particular purpose by the PCC are also unrestricted.

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors or grantors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Endowment funds are subject to specific conditions by donors that the capital must be maintained by the PCC.

The accounts include all transactions, assets and liabilities for which the PCC is responsible in law. They do not include the accounts of church groups that owe their main affiliation to another body or those that are informal gatherings of church members.



# THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

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#### 1 Accounting policies

(Continued)

##### 1.4 Income

Collections are recognised when received by the PCC.

Planned giving receivable under Gift Aid is recognised only when received.

Income tax recoverable on Gift Aid donations is recognised when the income is recognised.

Grants and legacies to the PCC are accounted for as soon as the PCC is notified of its legal entitlement, the amount due is quantifiable and its ultimate receipt by the PCC is reasonably certain.

Sales of books and magazines are accounted for gross.

Rental income from the letting of church premises is recognised when the rental is due.

##### 1.5 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to transfer economic benefit to a third party, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement, and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure is classified by activity. The costs of each activity are made up of the total of direct costs and shared costs, including support costs involved in undertaking each activity. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute to more than one activity and support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are apportioned between those activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Central staff costs are allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges are allocated on the portion of the asset's use.

Expenditure is recognised on an accrual basis as a liability is incurred.

Fundraising costs comprise the costs associated with attracting voluntary income and the costs of trading for fundraising purposes including the PCC's cafe.

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the PCC in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

Governance costs include those costs associated with meeting the constitutional and statutory requirements of the PCC.

All costs are allocated between the expenditure categories of the SOFA on a basis designed to reflect the use of the resource. Costs are analysed in the notes to the accounts as requested by the Trustees. This is a departure from the SORP which requires support costs to be allocated between the different activities engaged. The analysis in these accounts is thought to provide a more meaningful analysis to the readers of the accounts.

# THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

### 1 Accounting policies

(Continued)

#### 1.6 Tangible fixed assets

##### Consecrated land and buildings and moveable church furnishings

Consecrated and benefice property is excluded from the accounts by s.96(2)(a) of the Charities Act 2011. No value is placed on moveable church furnishings held by the church wardens on special trust for the PCC and which require a faculty for disposal since the PCC considers this to be inalienable property. All expenditure incurred during the year on consecrated or benefice buildings and moveable church furnishings, whether maintenance or improvement, is written off as expenditure in the SOFA and separately disclosed.

##### Other fixtures, fittings and equipment

Tangible fixed assets are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost or valuation, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

Depreciation is recognised so as to write off the cost or valuation of assets less their residual values over their useful lives on the following bases:

Plant and equipment	15% reducing balance
Fixtures and fittings	15% reducing balance

Freehold land and buildings are retained for Church use. These are stated at cost and have not been depreciated due to their market value being considered to be higher than their carrying value.

#### 1.7 Stocks

Net realisable value is the estimated selling price less all estimated costs of completion and costs to be incurred in marketing, selling and distribution.

### 2 Donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
	2025	2025	2025	2024	2024	2024
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Gift Aid	94,941	-	94,941	95,274	-	95,274
Legacies	1,000	-	1,000	2,000	94,454	96,454
Regular non gift aid donations	6,734	-	6,734	7,036	-	7,036
Sundry donations	9,279	1,769	11,048	3,873	5,417	9,290
Miscellaneous appeals	-	2,114	2,114	-	1,794	1,794
Insurance claims	1,940	4,196	6,136	-	29,429	29,429
Income tax recoverable on gift aid	25,400	-	25,400	32,755	-	32,755
Collections (open plate) at all services	17,580	-	17,580	16,878	-	16,878
Parish centre repairs	-	46,896	46,896	-	-	-
	<u>156,874</u>	<u>54,975</u>	<u>211,849</u>	<u>157,816</u>	<u>131,094</u>	<u>288,910</u>



# THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

#### 3 Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Unrestricted funds 2024 £
<b>Magazine income</b>		
Total	1,167	1,185
<b>PCC fees</b>		
Total	13,134	13,491
<b>Clergy fees</b>		
Total	11,394	12,004
	<u>25,695</u>	<u>26,680</u>

#### 4 Other trading activities

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Unrestricted funds 2024 £
Fundraising	5,523	9,214
Parish centre lettings	26,883	28,419
Catering income	72,198	57,509
Other trading activities	<u>104,604</u>	<u>95,142</u>

#### 5 Income from investments

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Income from unlisted investments	<u>1,555</u>	<u>4,756</u>	<u>6,311</u>	<u>1,848</u>	<u>8,632</u>	<u>10,480</u>

Restricted investment income is high in 2024 due to 2 years of Bayles interest being received.



# THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

### 6 Other income

	Unrestricted funds	Unrestricted funds
	2025	2024
	£	£
Feed in tariff	571	1,274

### 7 Raising funds

	Unrestricted funds	Unrestricted funds
	2025	2024
	£	£
<u>Trading costs</u>		
Catering costs	27,612	25,049
Parish Centre wages costs	47,792	42,482
	<u>75,404</u>	<u>67,531</u>
Trading costs	75,404	67,531

# THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

### 8 Charitable activities

	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Depreciation and impairment	5,699	6,577
Missionary Societies	5,741	6,879
Relief agencies	1,641	2,344
Magazine costs	336	400
Parish centre costs	36,252	37,225
Clergy fees surrendered to Diocese	15,306	18,029
Parish shares	121,272	115,500
Bank charges - Go Cardless	726	-
Organ restoration	484	445
Parish Centre repairs	21,448	-
Curate house expenses	1,988	1,425
Church running expenses	47,329	82,488
Pension contributions	1,197	930
Salaries, wages and honoraria	31,085	28,869
Sundry expenses	666	600
Machine lease and expenditure	2,784	2,784
Accountancy fees	2,890	2,890
Independent examination fees	650	650
HR support	3,360	3,287
	<u>300,854</u>	<u>311,322</u>
	<u>300,854</u>	<u>311,322</u>
<b>Analysis by fund</b>		
Unrestricted funds	257,292	262,849
Endowment funds -	4,064	4,660
Restricted funds	<u>39,498</u>	<u>43,813</u>
	<u>300,854</u>	<u>311,322</u>

Church running expenses have decreased in the year due to £29.4k being paid out relating to the repair of the heating system in 2024. This restricted expense was covered by an insurance claim received in that year.

Parish Centre repair work has been carried out in the year, this was covered by donations in the year.

### 9 Trustees

None of the Council members (or any persons connected with them) received any remuneration or benefits from the PCC during the year.

# THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

#### 10 Employees

##### Number of employees

The average monthly number of employees during the year was:

	2025 Number	2024 Number
	8	8
	<u>8</u>	<u>8</u>
<b>Employment costs</b>	<b>2025 £</b>	<b>2024 £</b>
Wages and salaries	74,761	67,587
Other pension costs	1,197	930
	<u>75,958</u>	<u>68,517</u>

There were no employees whose annual remuneration was £60,000 or more.

#### 11 Taxation

The charity is exempt from taxation on its activities because all its income is applied for charitable purposes.

#### 12 Tangible fixed assets

	Freehold land and buildings £	Plant and equipment £	Fixtures and fittings £	Total £
<b>Cost</b>				
At 1 January 2025	450,000	110,757	90,774	651,531
Additions	-	8,323	50	8,373
	<u>450,000</u>	<u>119,080</u>	<u>90,824</u>	<u>659,904</u>
At 31 December 2025	450,000	119,080	90,824	659,904
<b>Depreciation and impairment</b>				
At 1 January 2025	-	90,078	74,185	164,263
Depreciation charged in the year	-	3,204	2,495	5,699
	<u>-</u>	<u>93,282</u>	<u>76,680</u>	<u>169,962</u>
At 31 December 2025	-	93,282	76,680	169,962
<b>Carrying amount</b>				
At 31 December 2025	<u>450,000</u>	<u>25,798</u>	<u>14,144</u>	<u>489,942</u>
At 31 December 2024	<u>450,000</u>	<u>20,679</u>	<u>16,589</u>	<u>487,268</u>

The freehold land and buildings comprise of the Parish Centre. The Waldrige Mission Church site and the equity share of 16 Park Road North were both sold during the year.

#### 13 Fixed asset investments

# THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

#### 13 Fixed asset investments

(Continued)

	Total £
<b>Cost or valuation</b>	
At 1 January 2025	5,804
Valuation changes	1,006
At 31 December 2025	6,810
<b>Carrying amount</b>	
At 31 December 2025	6,810
At 31 December 2024	5,804

The investment relates to The Lisle and Dorothy Pattison Gift (394.189 Charifund Units).

The Trust Fund is an endowment trust and the income earned may be used for the general purposes of the PCC.

#### 14 Stocks

	2025 £	2024 £
Finished goods and goods for resale	60	60

#### 15 Debtors

	2025 £	2024 £
<b>Amounts falling due within one year:</b>		
Gift aid recoverable	19,000	19,000
Prepayments and accrued income	3,650	3,950
	22,650	22,950

#### 16 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2025 £	2024 £
Accruals and deferred income	5,841	14,849



# THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

### 17 Fund details

The unrestricted funds comprise the General and Areas/Groups Funds as well as the equity share of 16 Park Road North. All other funds are restricted in their use.

The endowment funds comprise of the trust fund as shown in note 12.

The bank account balances are represented by funds as follows:

Fund	Balance @ 01.01.25	Change in year	Transferred in year	Balance @ 31.12.25
General	32,097	(50,520)	32,286	13,863
Fabric	R 104,803	(6,551)	10,000	88,252
Organ Restoration Fund	R 5,994	(484)		5,510
Miscellaneous	R 31,984	18,945	997	49,932
Centre recoupment	R 21,289		21,289	-
	196,167	(38,610)	-	157,557
Total restricted bank balances	R			143,694
Total unrestricted bank balances				13,863



NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

- 17 -

# **THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ST MARY'S & ST CUTHBERT'S**

## **NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)**

***FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025***

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### **19 Related party transactions**

There were no disclosable related party transactions during the year (2024 - none).





THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY & ST. CUTHBERT,  
CHESTER-LE-STREET  
MONDAY 27<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2026, 7.30 pm in the PARISH CENTRE  
ANNUAL MEETING FOR THE ELECTION OF CHURCHWARDENS

AGENDA

All persons whose names are entered on the church electoral roll of the parish, or resident in the parish whose names are entered on a register of local government electors by reason of such residence, are entitled to vote at the election of churchwardens.

1. Bible Reading and Prayer
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of 2025 Election of Churchwardens Meeting
4. Matters arising
5. Thanks to Churchwardens
6. Election of Churchwardens
7. Any other business

## ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

Every lay person whose name is entered on the Church Electoral Roll of the parish (and no other person) is entitled to vote at the election of parochial representatives of the laity.

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of 2025 APCM
3. Matters arising
4. Electoral Roll Report –  
202 people on Electoral Roll (14 people have joined, 23 live outside the parish)
5. Annual Report – including fabric, deanery synod and safeguarding reports
6. Presentation of the accounts for 2025 & resolution to accept the accounts
7. Rector's Report
8. Deanery Synod Election: 3 spaces for 2026 – 2029
9. PCC Election: 6 spaces for 2026-2029
10. Appointments: Independent Examiner –  
Proposal: DMC North Accounting Services
11. Any Other Business
12. Closing Prayer



MINUTES OF THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST CUTHBERT,  
CHESTER LE STREET

Annual Meeting for the Election of Church Wardens  
Held on Tuesday 6 May 2025

Revd. Matt Strand, Rector, opened the Meeting and welcomed any new attendees

Minutes of 2024 Meeting: these were agreed as an accurate record.  
There were 3 abstentions from people who did not attend

Thanks to Churchwardens: Thanks were given to Churchwardens and particularly to Elaine Rayner who had completed a 6-year term

Election of Churchwardens:

3 Churchwardens were proposed and appointed:

Brian Armstrong  
Sue Begg  
Dorothy Hall

No election was required as there were 4 vacancies

A.O.B

None

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting  
Tuesday 6 May 2025

Apologies for Absence: Dennis & Sylvia Rudd, Michelle Dundas, Abbie Winter, Gordon Sanderson, Karen Richardson,

Matters Arising: None

Electoral Roll Report: 182 people on Electoral Roll, including 31 who live outside the Parish

Annual Reports: including Fabric Report, Deanery Synod and Safeguarding Reports. Matt said these reflected all that had been carried out in our Church between April 2024 and April 2025.

Thanks were given to people who had helped with the drapes in Cuthbert Hall and thanks were also given to kitchen volunteers.

Presentation of Accounts for 2024-25: No questions had been submitted on the Accounts.

Resolution to accept the Accounts was proposed and accepted unanimously. Thanks given to Treasurer Malcolm Austin

Rector's Report: Revd Matt Strand

Elections:

- Deanery Synod Elections:

Current Members:

Alex Nelson  
Rachel Orr  
Peter Southern

3 spaces available

June Austin and Paul Vincent were proposed and elected

- PCC Elections: 5 spaces available on the PCC were vacant

Jan Rowland  
Abbie Winter  
Will Hoy  
Elaine Rayner  
Sharon Pritchard

They were all proposed, seconded and elected

Appointments:

It was agreed to continue with our current auditors – DMC North  
Accounting Services  
Any Other Business:

A.O.B.

Thanks were given to Matt

Closing Prayer: the meeting closed with a prayer from Revd Miriam

Dorothy Hall PCC Secretary



## Rectors Report APCM 2025

Believe it or not, this is now my 4<sup>th</sup> APCM in Chester le Street! Although the first APCM was only a few weeks after I arrived, and this report is definitely longer than that one!

In this time, the life and ministry of the church has continued to progress and develop and as we look back at the past year, this year has certainly been no different. We have seen both the joys of parish life, whilst also facing the challenges.

We see this reflected in the many reports of the life of the parish – we can see God at work in so many ways. The reports are bursting with life and activity because of the hard work of so many people in this church, and because of the grace and goodness of God. Thank you for those who have submitted reports and given us all a snapshot of what has been going on in the life of our parish. Thank you to everyone involved and the many volunteer hours that make this possible. If I tried to name everyone individually who is involved in all that we do, I would either miss someone out or a ministry or activity out, so I won't do that. But please know that your contribution is greatly valued.

Last year, I mentioned about the general downward trend of the traditional ways that people in our parish would engage with our church even if they are not regular worshippers with us – that is through baptisms, weddings and funerals. Our number of funerals have dropped again slightly this year, with the number of weddings and baptisms being very similar.

But with this as a backdrop and general trend, on the other hand, we have also seen the numbers of people coming through the doors of the Parish Centre increase. This is a reflection of the significance of our hospitality. I was in the Parish Centre this morning and I heard the comment being made about how busy the café was. We have seen this increase in footfall reflected in room hire and therefore income from the Parish Centre.



Our services are also regularly welcoming new people, and our congregation size is growing, based on the statistics I submitted to the Diocese in January. Our typical Sunday attendance has increased as has our number of children and young people. As we seek to become a younger and church, this is very good news. The making of and growing disciples of Jesus remains core to what we are about.

These statistics are only based on our services, and don't cover things like Rhyme Time or Mother's Union or the many other mid-week ministries and activities that happen both inside our buildings as well as in the community.

We have also thankfully been warmer for a good part of 2024, as the heating in church was fixed, so thank you to everybody who contributed or gave towards that either practically with the process or with the fundraising effort.

We have also addressed some of the challenges with the Parish Centre – in particular the drains, but there are ongoing challenges with the gas supply and other issues, which I will come back to in a minute.

The backdrop of all of this life and ministry, is unsurprisingly and unfortunately the increase in running costs. Things such as the buying of resources, the wages for our staff and the Parish Pledge have all increase. Utility prices remain very high after their sharp increase a few years ago.

We are therefore in a position where we need to balance our income with our expenditure. One of the key ways of doing this is with the cost of running the Parish Centre. The age and state of the building cannot be ignored.

For example, we are losing a lot of heat out of our windows. They were the best you could buy in the 80s, but now they are not very efficient and a number of them are broken. We also know there are parts of the carpet that are in desperate need of replacing and the paintwork has seen better days. We would also like to use the energy we are generating through our solar panels by installing batteries and using this



energy to power what happens here. We are therefore hoping to reduce our running costs and also help to ensure we are a welcoming and hospitable building.

We are actively seeking a number a grants to do this, but we also need financial support from the congregation. The more funds we raise, the more we can apply for in grants, and the more we can do to improve the Parish Centre. This improvement will significantly help us financially in the longer term because we won't spend so much money on heating an inefficient building. What we are able to do, will entirely depend on how much we are able to raise.

We are therefore going to be launching a fundraising campaign for the Parish Centre, with the details hopefully finalised this week. A booklet is being produced and will hopefully be shared with the congregation on Sunday.

We are also wanting to develop and continue to grow the ministry of the life of the church. With Dave leaving, we will begin the conversation about his replacement with the Diocese in June, alongside having a conversation about a children and youth worker. There is funding available through the Diocese for children and youth work and so we will be talking to the Diocese about how the two roles – the associate and a children and youth worker – can be funded. However, it must be said that the Diocese are not going to completely pay for a children and youth worker and so we also need to ensure that this role is financially sustainable. Therefore, reducing our running costs of our buildings has a big impact not just on buildings, but on the opportunities for people and ministry.

And so, as we look back, we hold together all the things we must be thankful to God for. The ministry and growth that is taking place. But we are also mindful of the ongoing challenges and continuing to do what we feel God is calling us to. We pray for God's grace to abound as we seek his will for us into this next year.

Revd Matt Strand



## Fabric Report 2025

### Work carried out in the Church building

The work that was planned on the spire was completed. This consisted of the replacement of a rusted steelwork support, the repair of the lightning conductors and refurbishment and re-installation of the weathervane. There was also some repair to stonework on the Tower which was damaged by the weathervane as it came down in the heavy winds. Bird proof netting was fitted to the inside of the Louvre dents in the bell tower to prevent pigeons from nesting and damaging the stonework and making a mess at the church entrance.

The council also repaired the damaged clock pointer. We have reported that the clock is not showing the correct time at the moment but will have to wait until they come to look at it as the clock is their responsibility.

Insulated foil has been fitted behind radiators that are on outside facing walls to prevent heat loss and new brush Draught Proofing has been installed to doors and the internal porch to try to keep the heat in the building and draughts out.

The work to refurbish and repair the cast iron gutters and downspouts unfortunately did not go ahead as planned because of a family illness and bereavement with the contractor but we hope that it will go ahead soon. We send our prayers and condolences to the family.

We are hoping to get the church LED lighting updated and improved with the help of the £3000 grant. Thanks to Rachel Orr and Malcolm Rowland for their work to achieve this.

There is still some outstanding work to be done in the bell tower as identified in the quinquennial report. This is the painting of the steel

work supporting the bells. We will be getting quotes for this project soon.

### Work carried out in the Parish Centre

We must thank you all for your most generous donations to our ongoing Parish Centre fundraising and for the many grants we have received from many sources that have enabled us to do the work so far this year in our Parish Centre. This work not only improves our building but it also helps us reduce our carbon footprint and helps us achieve a Net Zero target.

We have had new windows, doors and blinds installed. We have had insulation put in the lofts. The walls of the centre have had cavity wall insulation installed. We have had new kitchen equipment including a new electric oven, warming cabinet and water boiler. A few roof tiles had to be replaced near the Solar Panels to prevent leaks. The wooden floors in 'Mary' and 'Cuthbert' rooms have been re-polished as necessary to keep them in good condition. Some extra curtains have been added to the walls in Cuthbert to further improve the sound quality for the 11 am service. Thanks to Malcolm Rowland and Bob Davison for doing this. Thank you to everyone who works in or helps out in any way to keep our Parish Centre running smoothly and well maintained.

Brian Armstrong – Churchwarden

### **Safeguarding**

As named Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) for St Mary & St Cuthbert's Church I wish to report the following:

There are currently no active safeguarding incidents to report at this present time.

All existing safeguarding incidents have been actioned and dealt with following the appropriate procedures.



In the past 12 months we have had two safeguarding incidents. These have been fully investigated by the safeguarding team and, where necessary, outside agencies have been involved. The safeguarding incidents which we have supported in the last 12 months have brought new challenges for us. We are extremely grateful to the love and support shown by many of the Parish Centre volunteers, in particular those who have helped keep our most vulnerable members safe during this time. The safeguarding team have worked to support the wider families of those in need, ensuring health and safety is ensured for all members of our church, whilst supporting our most vulnerable.

### **Safer Recruitment of volunteers**

We continue to use the Parish Safeguarding Dashboards to review and monitor our safeguarding policies and procedures. The dashboard is rooted in those safeguarding actions that are necessary under the Church of England 'Promoting a Safer Church' policy and the Durham Diocesan Safeguarding Policy. This remains ongoing.

During the past 12 months we have made good progress in completing this dashboard as we add details of training and checks completed by volunteers for different roles within the church. We thank all those who have completed and updated their training thus far. Support from the PCC is welcomed in achieving this.

Continued appreciation is extended to Sharon Dodds, Deputy PSO for all her hard work and dedication which occurs behind the scenes, updating the Parish Dashboard on an ongoing basis.

It is imperative that we work together as a team to help keep our church safe.

For all those involved in keeping our church safe, we give thanks.

Sarah Hindle-Green



## PCC Report 2025-2026

The PCC had 22 members this year and there have been 7 meetings held since January 2025 up to this APCM.

The following matters were covered:

- Election of new PCC secretary – Rachel Orr. Dorothy Hall thanked for her 10 years' service.
- Fundraising launch for the Parish Centre supported by the Net Zero Action Planning Team. (Please see Outreach articles for further details.)
- Money raised through grants currently amounting to £22,413
- Areas in the Parish Centre addressed through fundraising – windows, blinds, loft insulation, kitchen appliances no electric and not gas, cavity wall insulation – this should have an impact upon our energy bills.
- Weather vane, clock repairs and church gutters carried out – the pictures shared in Outreach show how amazing the work was.
- Reports from Deanery Synod meetings – see separate report and all minutes are available to read.
- A portable card machine is now in use in the Parish Centre.
- Peter Jeynes given permission to officiate
- Sharon Pritchard nomination to train for licensed lay ministry approved by PCC
- 2 Debit cards approved by PCC for spending use
- The CofE has sold off the Parish Buying Scheme for energy and the PCC decided to stay in the new scheme.
- Diocesan Synod have approved a new safeguarding policy. The policy has been streamlined so that it reflects/signposts to the national guidance for safeguarding.
- Church charity accounts have been discussed with some monies being awarded to our charitable giving.
- DBS data breach reported by Access Personal Checking Services Ltd (APCS) – individuals affected in our church have been contacted.
- Limited remaining new graveyard space for ashes – estimated another few years.
- CMS financial support will continue, now that Ian and Sue Jennings have returned to UK, and will transfer to a new couple Elise and John Fletcher based in South East Asia in Bangkok



- Associate and Children & Youth Worker – The Archdeacon will be contacting the Bishop's leadership team first and then a further meeting will discuss the processes.
- We are moving to a new accounting system through the diocese.
- Additional curtains added to Cuthbert.
- Guided pledge discussed and confirmed at £121,000

Rachel Orr, PCC Secretary

### **Deanery Synod Report (Full Minutes are available)**

- For the last year our church has been well represented at all synod meetings.
- At all synod meetings, each church represented spoke about their joys and challenges.
- Synod received a presentation from Claire Estall and Maddy Fisher from Communities Together Durham (CTD), detailing their work in our communities supporting people who are experiencing poverty of all kinds. There was a demonstration of how easily families with two children and a typical, but below the national average, income could fall into financial difficulties as a result of unexpected outgoings such as cars needing servicing, vets bills, new school uniforms, etc. Synod heard that working families were the fastest growing group of people who were falling into poverty, and that the financial baseline for free school meals was very low and means tested. Claire and Maddy noted that the Church was uniquely placed to support people experiencing any type of poverty as a result of geography (Churches are in all communities), autonomy (we need no permissions to care for people) and our calling to give hospitality. It was also noted that many people experiencing poverty have a distrust of institutions and government, even Doctors and housing associations, but they do trust the Church. CTD were carrying out a number of projects and initiatives to support our communities, including financial models for debt support, the Parish Nursing Project, toolkits to challenge negative mindsets, propaganda and bias (which Churches can use), a curriculum for year 7 and 8 designed for clergy and laity use with schools, a prison chaplaincy project, and the first food summit for the North East was planned for 2026 – “Hope and Scope – beyond food banks”, with aim

of maximizing people's income and sourcing better and more economical food provision.

- Presentation by Revd Claire Gibbs, Creation Care Officer. (See Outreach article reflecting looking after our planet.)
- New Archdeacon of Sunderland is Rev Katherine Bagnall - announced. Rev Katherine presided over communion at Deanery Synod in October 2025.
- Presentation by Revd Steph Clark on the Vacancy Audit Process (VAP)
- Bishop of Durham announced and timescales shared
- Other vacancies for churches in our announced.

Rachel Orr

## **Net Zero and Parish Centre Fundraising**

We have replaced the windows which were inefficient and broken and made the Parish Centre warmer for the winter. We have also replaced the old window blinds, the gas cooker with an electric cooker and a new extra water boiler. We have had loft and cavity wall insulation installed. These will all go towards reducing our gas consumption and help to bring our heating bills down. All the lighting in the Parish Centre will soon be LED and we shall have motion sensors in toilets and corridor areas.

This was achieved through donations from the congregation and local community and grants from the Diocese and the following charitable trusts:

Durham Diocese £3363

Benefact Trust £2300

Sir John Priestman Trust £5000

Catherine Cookson Trust £1000

Church of England Decarbonisation Grant £3000

Beatrice Laing £2500

Rothley Trust £1250



### Next steps:

Continue to apply for grants as well as fundraising to zone of heating with thermostats so we only heat spaces being used and plan for new flooring and redecoration.

Our church is also registered with <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/> and top tips on being more environmentally and eco-friendly are shared in Outreach every month.

Rachel Orr

### **Mothers' Union January – December 2025**

There have been some changes to our membership this year, currently totalling 47. We have enrolled two new members but also sadly a much loved member has passed. And two members have transferred to another Branch within the Diocese.

We have met regularly every second and fourth Mondays in the month with slight variations due to Bank and school holidays. These meetings being regularly attended by 25-30 members.

With the sudden and unexpected resignation of the Branch Leader, it was agreed at the Annual General Meeting in 2025 that the Committee would run the Branch in the absence of a Branch Leader. We did, however welcome a new member to the Committee. The Committee have met regularly to organise meetings and fundraising events.

During the year, our members can be seen ministering in many Church activities, Baptisms, Messy Church, Toddler Rhyme Time, Warm Spaces, in the Café and in Church services generally.

As usual for Mothering Sunday, Mothers' Union members assembled daffodils into posies to be presented to those ladies attending services that day. Bookmarks eing gifted to those attending the Thursday service the same week.

Members have continued to raise funds or donate goods to support local needs as well as Mothers' Union projects abroad. By celebrating and sponsoring influential women in our lives we were able to raise funds for Mothers' Union annual fundraising event to aid mothers in developing countries. Goods donated to our Harvest Festival Service were taken to a local Foodbank. A Christmas Fayre, and an Auctioning of donated goods on another occasion, gave us the opportunity to raise funds for Mothers' Union work at home and abroad.

We hosted the Deanery Quiet Day when we welcomed Mothers' Union members from other Churches in Chester-le-Street and Houghton-le-Spring Deanery, to a service in the Parish Church. The unexpected response of the written prayers from this reflective service can be seen on display in the Parish Centre.

We too, have travelled to join other Branch members for Deanery events, travelling to St Michael's and All Angels church Houghton-le-Spring and parading our banner for Lady Day, to Christ Church, Great Lumley for the Deanery "Rise Up" service and to Holy Trinity church, Washington to participate in the Deanery Overseas service.

At Branch meetings we have celebrated Holy Communion with Revd Matt, Revd Miriam visited us at "Celebrations" time to present long services awards to those members who had served 45 years, 30 years and 25 years respectively. Later in the year Revd Miriam joined us again to speak at our Carol service which was open to the wider church and community. Invitations being delivered to local churches. Peter Jeynes and John Hopper guided us through Lent.

Guest speaker, Maureen Nevitt from the local charity "Books and Bread for Kenya", gave us an update on the support the charity gives to needy children in Kenya.



Other Branch activities included topics such as, Inspirational women from the North East, crosses and their significance and the symbolic "Dove". Again some of our responses can be seen on display in the Parish Centre.

A very enjoyable social event was our Christmas meal at The Wheatsheaf, Barley Mow. Also some members joined Branch members of St Michael and All Angels, Houghton-le-Spring at their Summer of Hope event, a strawberry tea with entertainment by Sunderland Male Voice choir.

Our Branch were represented at Diocesan events, Council meetings and Founder's Day service held in Durham. And at two very special services held at Durham Cathedral, Indoor Members Prayer Circle and the Mothers' Union Festival service when again we paraded our banner.

As a Branch we have been very busy embracing new challenges and changes which we hope will bear fruit in the future.

The Committee would like to thank all Staff members, with special thanks to Jan and all our members for their prayers, generosity and support throughout the year.

Aileen Armstrong, Branch Secretary

## **Pastoral Team**

The Pastoral Team continues to offer pastoral care to any member of the congregation and wider community. This includes regular individual visits for general support and prayer, ad-hoc visits on request, bereavement visits and many regular Home Communion visits.

This past year past year has seen us continue to provide monthly Holy Communion services at St Mary's Nursing Home, Picktree Court Care Home, both sites of Lindisfarne Care Home and The Elms.

Holyoakes monthly drop-in group at South Pelaw continues to be a blessing to the community, thanks to its volunteers.



Huge gratitude goes to our team of volunteers who carry out these visits with compassion and respect, demonstrating God's love for all and strengthening our church 's links within the community.

Sharon Dodds

## **Bereavement Support Group**

This year we have completed the third group and started a fourth, which will come to an end in June. A further group will start in September. Group meetings have between 6 to 12 attendees, typically 8-10, including Louise and myself and Sue Begg when needed. Some attended many meetings, some only one or two. We had originally envisaged that new group members would attend each group and then new members would start a new group. However, some have joined a group late in its cycle and continue into the next, and others have benefited from coming to several groups. Recruitment has been via word of mouth and posters in the parish centre. Disappointingly, posters in local supermarkets, the Elms, and writing to all the local GP practices' social prescribers and funeral homes, has not yet resulted in any new referrals.

We continue to be grateful for Sue Begg's gift of hospitality to the bereavement support group for all our sessions.

There is a loose curriculum, in that there are areas that we now know all bereaved people will want to cover. We try to make each topic reflect what the participants most want to cover at that time. The topic of the next session is chosen by general agreement of the group. Stories and difficulties are shared and there is much mutual support. And surprisingly, given the nature of everyone's loss, sometimes laughter.

At the end of each course our members can join the popular 'bereavement drop-in' facilitated by Norman and Julie, which runs on alternate Wednesday afternoons, for which we are very grateful.

Paul and Louise Vincent

## **Care home services at Picktree Lodge and Durham House.**

Louise and I continue to visit both care homes once a month to lead services. These are a lot of fun and very rewarding. The congregation members clearly value our visits. We try to make the service relatively liturgy light, and we use some familiar passages for each service, including psalm 23. We typically have an attendance of about 14 to 20 residents.

We sing two songs usually accompanied by sax or guitar, mostly familiar hymns.

We have a participatory type of activity. A recent addition has been a set of real handbells which we have great fun trying to ring in 'rounds,' but usually end up making a happy noise. Acted out bible sketches seem to work well. Louise finishes the service with prayers.

We have started communion services at Durham House, at their request.

We have worked closely with activity coordinators which has been a real blessing in itself.

Paul and Louise Vincent

## **Prayer Ministry**

Prayer ministry continues to be available at the 11.00am services, thanks to our wonderfully dedicated prayer ministry team including Tessa, Ann, Val, Karen, Lynda, Alan and Louise.

We would love more people to take advantage of prayer ministry provision, in response to the sermon and for personal requests.

It's always a privilege to support people in prayer and an encouragement to see the difference it makes. The Lord delights in us drawing near to Him in prayer.

Louise Vincent



## Litter Picking Ministry

The litter picking groups at St Mary's and St Cuthbert's continue to be a visible and practical expression of our church's commitment to caring for God's world and serving our local community. Rooted in our Christian vision and values, this ministry brings together environmental stewardship, community engagement, and personal wellbeing in a simple but powerful act of service.

### Vision and Values

Litter picking is one of **practical stewardship**: responding to God's call to care for creation and to love our neighbours through tangible action. By regularly caring for our streets, paths and green spaces, we seek to honour God as Creator and demonstrate a faith that is lived out beyond the church walls. This activity reflects our shared values.

### Regular Activity and Commitment

The group continues to meet consistently:

- **Every Sunday**
- **Every Tuesday**
- **Every other Wednesday**

This regular rhythm has been key to making a sustained and visible difference in our local area. The commitment of volunteers week in and week out is a strong testament to the faithfulness and generosity of our church community.

### Impact and Outcomes

The scale of the impact continues to be significant:

- **Over 2,000 bags of litter collected each year**
- **Around 1,000 discarded vapes removed annually**

These figures represent cleaner, safer public spaces and a positive witness to the wider community. Regular activity means that areas remain cleaner for longer, helping to discourage further littering and improving pride in the local environment.



## Community Partnerships

The litter picking ministry has developed strong links beyond the church:

- **Local businesses** have supported and participated in activities
- **Local schools** have engaged with the project, helping to foster environmental awareness among young people

These collaborations reflect our commitment to working openly and positively with others for the common good, and help build relationships between the church and the wider community.

## Growth and Wellbeing

The group has **continued to grow**, welcoming people of different ages and backgrounds. Alongside the environmental benefits, participants regularly report the positive effects on:

- **Mental wellbeing**, through social connection, purpose, and time outdoors
- **Physical wellbeing**, through gentle, regular activity

In this way, the ministry not only serves the community but also supports the health and wellbeing of those who take part.

## Financial Support and Resources

We are grateful to have received a **£500 donation from a local businessman**, given specifically in recognition of the positive impact of the work. This generous support has enabled the purchase of **litter collection trolleys**, making the activity safer, more accessible, and more sustainable for volunteers.

## Communication and Visibility

The work of the group is shared through an active Facebook community, helping to encourage participation, celebrate achievements, and maintain transparency and accountability. This has also helped raise awareness of the church's role within the local community.

## **Conclusion**

The litter picking groups at St Mary's and St Cuthbert's remain a strong example of faith in action. Through regular, committed service, we continue to care for God's creation, strengthen community relationships, and support the wellbeing of those involved. We give thanks for the dedication of volunteers, the support of partners, and the opportunity to live out our Christian calling in such a practical and visible way. We are grateful for all those who help lead and participate making a difference across the area.

Ian Hoult

## **Messy Church Report**

**Group Name:** Messy Church

**Group Leader (with responsibility):** Will Hoy

**Group Leaders:** 10

**Group Members:** 52 children (currently on the system – up from 42 in 2024)

We have had such an exciting year for Messy Church. Our numbers have stayed steady, and have been able to build our relationships with the families, which can be shown by attendance in some of our intergenerational and special services.

## **Achievements and Highlights**

One of our highlights from the last year was our July Messy Church which took place in the Rectory Garden. There was a different atmosphere than normal, with us being outside and doing slightly different activities.

## **Activities and Events**

During the year, we met 11 times – each month excluding August.



Each month we have a different theme, excluding the obvious themes, like Easter and Christmas, we also focus on parables, and many different stories teaching us lots of different things.

In our July Messy Church, as per our new tradition this took place in the Rectory Garden, having smaller activities, and also having a BBQ.

The first half of the session (4-5pm) runs in Mary, where there is a variety of crafts made for all ages, that way there is something for everyone. We usually have one food craft, followed by 5-6 craft/building activities.

After the children finish their crafts and activities at around 5pm, they walk across to the church for a short, fun-filled service. Normally we start off with a game or activity which is linked to the theme, for example, finding the sheep around the church for the parable of the lost sheep. The celebration (the service) consists of the story being told (which is normally in an interactive way), pictures of what the children have made, discussions on what they most enjoyed, and then it is followed by an action song, as well as an interactive talk and prayer.  
Will Hoy

## **Warm Spaces**

Our warm spaces group meets twice weekly on Tuesdays and Fridays, we have 8 volunteers split between the two meetings and approximately 20 to 25 regular guests. Our guests are offered refreshments with cake and biscuits and during the colder months (Oct to March) the addition of homemade soup on a Tuesday and sandwiches on a Friday.

At all our sessions we offer colouring / wordsearch books and on a Tuesday we have a Quiz and on a Friday we have bingo, both activities are greatly enjoyed. We celebrate birthdays with a cake and card; each guest receives a food bag once a month and we hold a Christmas party with Christmas carols from the local Ukulele group which we greatly appreciate and each guest receives a present. During our sessions we feel it is not just about giving out refreshments and food but spending



time getting to know our guests, offering emotional support, pastoral care and prayer when needed and showing Gods love in all we do.

With the very generous donations of food from our Church congregation, we are able to give each guest a food bag once a month. We are also able to provide approx. 16 bags a month to Durham food bank. We also have 4 emergency food bags made up for anyone who walks in and is in need of some support, the clergy and Jan are aware of this and can give out when needed.

Once a week the clothes that are donated are offered to our guests for a small donation, this is always popular and any money made goes straight back into Warm spaces funds to cover the running costs . However, it is important to mention that anyone in need , the homeless or anyone struggling are offered whatever they need from the clothes and toiletry donations .

We also have for the homeless, flasks and camping mats which were bought with a donation, Thankfully we have been able to kit out quite a few of our homeless guests. Our expenses cover the cost of providing food and drinks, craft supplies, Birthday cakes and cards, Christmas buffet and presents. Without these funds we would not be able to provide many of the prementioned items and activities, so your generous donations of food and clothes are much appreciated. We also bag up clothes that were not needed and we try to send them to homeless charities.

Thank you from the warm spaces team and guests for your love, prayers and generous donations.

Matthew 25:35

For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in.

Michelle Dundas

## **Parish Centre Café**

It has been a busy year in the Parish Centre Café. It is a real resource and a place for the community to come and to gather throughout the week. A space for those who come daily, weekly or those who are just popping in. There is such an incredible team of volunteers who, without whom the café wouldn't be able to operate as well as our paid staff, Sharon, Ben, Caroline and Will.

Our kitchen volunteers do a great job of washing dishes, washing pots and pans, cleaning up after Sharon, Ben, Will and Caroline. They also may ask them to prepare the salads if we are particularly busy, also working the coffee machine which can still be problematic from time to time. Our waitress staff do a great job of taking orders and serving the customers, they also clear and clean the tables before they sit down for their free lunch which is well deserved for all staff. We ask all our customers to respect our amazing volunteers.

## **CAP Job Club**

Our Job Club started in 2017 utilises the course created by Christians Against Poverty (CAP) a charity set up in Bradford 30 years ago to assist individuals escape from debt. CAP is championed by the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) to run job clubs across the country and we have received requests to organise and run job clubs in towns nearby. We remain focused on our dual aims of helping individuals in preparing them for their job journey from self-confidence improvement, through recognising skills they possess to CV improvement and job interview practice alongside being witness to the transformational impact of Jesus on lives.

Since the last APCM in 2025, the CAP Job Club Team have completed 3 eight week courses, supported with referrals from the Chester Le Street Job Centre

Attendances vary but the courses have involved participants ranging in number from 5 to 11 . The courses are well supported by volunteers including trained coaches, and befrienders.



We have seen many attendees achieve their goals in finding employment, seen many feel that they are loved and have skills and some making steps towards a love for Jesus.

The Team have completed 18 courses since 2017

In the last year courses ran as follows:

Series 16: February 2025 - April 2025

Series 17: September 2025 - November 2025

Series 18: February 2026 - March 2026

We are in regular contact with the Job Centre who support our work. The Team held a review in April 2025 when Team members discussed how to improve the delivery of the courses.

If you have a heart for helping others in a practical way to find work then please contact Ian Goulding (07594525585) as we are always looking to increase the team. Thanks to Matt and the PCC for financially supporting this outreach.  
Ian Goulding & Dennis Hall

## **Open the Book**

During the last year the team has continued to visit 3 schools (Chester-le-Street CofE, Newker and Red Rose) on a monthly basis. Although the team has a couple more members than we have had in previous years because of personal commitments and other problems some good and some not so good, we have sometimes had a bit of a struggle to get together enough members to be able to do justice to the stories we are telling. However we have fulfilled all our planned visits. It is a privilege and a pleasure to visit the schools and do this work. We are warmly welcomed at all three schools.

These schools all visit the church at various times during the year. But Red Rose only bring their Key Stage 2 children and Key Stage 1 children miss out. So just before Christmas we were asked if we could do a Christingle service for them at the School. The children had made their



Christingles in lesson time and we showed a Powerpoint presentation, Bryan dressed in a Christingle costume. The afternoon ended with the children lighting their Christingles and singing 2 Christmas songs. It was a great time enjoyed by all and I think it might well be repeated next Christmas.

If you would like to find out more about Open the Book, do get in touch with myself or Ann Wilson via the Parish Office.

Norma Hedley

## Small Groups

Small groups are a key way that people can develop in their discipleship and receive spiritual nourishment. Many of the groups have been meeting together for several years and good friendships have been formed as people have grown together in faith.

Each group decides whether to study a theme or a book of the bible, and there are many resources available to use. Some groups include sung worship in their time together and draw on other creative arts such as poetry or artwork. At Christmas one group distributed small knitted angels to the people of Chester-le-Street.

Revd Miriam meets with the small group leaders quarterly to reflect, receive some input and support one another.

Accounts can be viewed on the website:

[www.maryandcuthbert.org.uk/apcm](http://www.maryandcuthbert.org.uk/apcm)

