

St Michael & All Angels
Houghton-le-Spring

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING 2021

Sunday 16th May
11.15 am



St Michael & All Angels Parish Church, Houghton-le-Spring
Meeting of Parishioners and Annual Parochial Church Meeting
Sunday 26th April 2021

AGENDA

MEETING OF PARISHIONERS:

- 1. Prayers**
- 2. Apologies** for Absence
- 3. Minutes** of meeting held on Sunday 25th October 2020
- 4. Election** of Church Wardens

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING:

- 1. Minutes** of Meeting held on Sunday 25th October 2020 and matters arising.
- 2. Notification** of any other items of business
- 3. Electoral Roll Report and Parish Statistics**
- 4. Rector's Report**
- 5. Presentation of Annual Report for 2020**
 - Annual Accounts, Treasurer's Reports, Independent Examiner's Report
 - Church Wardens' Reports and Fabric Reports
 - Deanery Synod Report
 - PCC Secretary's Report
 - Safeguarding Report
 - Reports from the Church Affiliated Organisations
- 6. Elections** Assistant Church Wardens; Parochial Church Council Members.
- 7. Appointments** Electoral Roll Officer; Gift Aid Officer; Sidespersons; Independent Examiner of Church Accounts; PCC Representation for Readers and Pastoral Assistants
- 8. 'Looking forward'** by the Rector
- 9. Any other business**

There will be an initial meeting of the PCC immediately after the APCM, to appoint Church Officers (Secretary, Treasurer, Vice Chair, Safeguarding Officer) and agree date of next PCC.

Minutes of the 96th Annual Meeting of Parishioners

ST. MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS PARISH CHURCH, HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING

Sunday 25th October 2020

In attendance

Priest-in-Charge Reverend John Barron, Curate John d'Silva and 26 Parishioners: 13 physically present in Church; 13 present virtually on Zoom/dial-in.

1. The Rector welcomed everyone – those in Church, those on Zoom - to the meeting. He commented that the Annual Report had been made available on-line, and that some hard copies were available in Church. Additional hard copies could be obtained from the Parish Administrator.
2. Curate John opened the meeting in prayer.
3. Apologies for absence were received from: Kathleen Armour, Paul Armour, Kevin Bond.
4. The Minutes of the meeting held on Sunday 7th April 2019, having been circulated, were taken as read. They were confirmed and signed.

5. Election of Church Wardens

The Rector had received two nominations for the office of Church Warden: Rita Turnbull and Alastair Bradley. Both Rita and Alastair were elected unanimously to serve as Church Wardens until the 2021 APCM. They were thanked and congratulated.

On behalf of himself, the PCC and the Church community, the Rector expressed thanks and gratitude to John Lambton for his years of service as Church Warden. John's contribution had been greatly appreciated.

This concluded the meeting of Parishioners

Minutes of the ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING held on 25th October 2020

Those present had had access to a copy of the 2020 Annual Report, either on-line or in hard copy, and the Rector guided them through the Report as follows:

- 1. The Minutes** of the meeting held on 7th April 2019, having been circulated, were taken as read. They were unanimously accepted and were signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.
- 2. No other items of business were notified.**
- 3. Electoral Roll and Parish Statistics**
 - a) Electoral Roll - The current number on the electoral roll is 131, an increase of 2 over last year. Typically, the electoral roll grows as the year progresses.
 - b) Parish statistics - The Rector stressed the care which goes into ensuring the figures are accurate. He highlighted some of the key statistics: our worshipping community numbers 143; usual Sunday numbers are 93 adults, 5 children; last October (formal count always taken in October) average weekly attendance was 152 (similar to previous year); St Michael's holds a significant number of occasional offices (in 2019 48 baptisms, 11 weddings, 40 funerals in Church); attendance on Christmas Eve/Day was 432 (similar to previous year). The statistics are on public view. There were no questions.

4. Rector's Report

'I still feel deeply privileged to be the Rector of St Michael and All Angels. Being new to the parish has given me the opportunity to see the place with fresh eyes and I've seen so many strengths in our church.

We have a very gifted community with a wide variety of talents and a hugely committed 'core' in our congregation that have a 'can do' attitude in the face of the challenges and opportunities associated with being church in a place such as this.

We have great variety and flexibility in our worship styles with a dedicated team of ministers and a gifted traditional choir and contemporary music group. We have a big heart for being a caring and inclusive community and I have seen people's lives transformed through their involvement in our community.

We have great engagement with many parts of our wider community through our Space4 project and in so many other ways such as involvement in Houghton Feast, our 'Open the Book' teams and the Toddler Group.

We have a traditional legacy of being a church committed to serving our local community and that service continues very much in our present.

I've also seen a number of 'opportunities' for us as church in my first months.

We identified a gap in our financial plan and we took a number of what I regard as successful actions to address this. We also looked at our governance structures and how to help PCC to carry out their role as trustees for the church, introducing some sub-committees

During the year, we spent time looking at our 'Space4' community project and revisiting our vision and values and it felt to me that there was a strong 'reconnection' between our church and our project as well as a strong commitment to the future of the project.

Last year saw the agreement of the updated Deanery Plan with reduced clergy numbers across local parishes including our own and this is something that will feature in the coming months and years.

Finally, the pandemic has, of course, had a big impact on our church life since last year and I'll say a little more on that further in the agenda.'

5. Presentation of Annual Report for 2020

a) Annual Accounts, Treasurer's Reports, Independent Examiner's Report

- Treasurer AB presented the Annual Accounts.
- He commented that some funds had been moved from restricted to unrestricted, where that was appropriate.
- AB thanked the Close the Gap team: the activities and initiatives they had organised had raised significant funds for the Church. Thanks were also due to others for their individual fundraising efforts.
- Overall, it had been a positive year: we were now on a much sounder financial footing.
- We had, however, not met our 2020 Parish Share commitment.
- The Rector observed that our financial resources enable us to do what we do as Church.
- There were no questions for the Treasurer. The Accounts were accepted unanimously, as were the treasurer's reports and the Independent Examiner's Report.

The Rector then referred the meeting to the following Reports:

b) Church Wardens' Reports and Fabric Reports

c) Deanery Synod Report

d) PCC Secretary's Report

e) Safeguarding Report

All of these Reports were accepted unanimously.

f) Reports from Church Affiliated Organisations

Finally, the Rector referred the meeting to the Reports submitted by the Church Affiliated Organisations. He thanked those who worked so hard to enable the many activities to take place: the range of activities reflected the richness of life in St Michael's.

The meeting voted to accept these Reports and the Annual Report in its entirety (with two amendments to the list of Sidespersons at the bottom of page 5).

6. Elections

Assistant Church Warden: Thelma Steel had expressed her willingness to stand again. All were in favour.

Deanery Synod representatives: Nominations had been received on behalf of David Hann and Kevin Bond. All were in favour of acceptance. There is still one vacancy, which will be carried forward.

PCC members: Five vacancies (not three, as advertised). Nominations received on behalf of Clare Taylor, Dave Fulton, Anne Goodman, Brian Scott and Malcolm Foster. All duly elected.

Congratulations to all those who were newly elected.

7. Appointments

Electoral Roll Officer – Rita Turnbull

Gift Aid Officer – Sue Bradley

Sidespersons – see amended list at bottom of page 5 of Annual Report.

Independent Examiner of Church Accounts – Peter Brown

PCC Representation for Readers and Pastoral Assistants – Ann Clappison

8. ‘Looking forward’ by the Rector

The Rector shared his vision for the year ahead. Key points were:

- This was a strange time for the APCM – $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the year! The Covid-19 pandemic had changed so many things.
- The year had been challenging, but people had risen to the challenge, caring for each other and the wider community.
- Many activities had gone on-line: Church Services; book club; PCC meetings; the choir’s musical contribution; Signpost.
- We had all had to grapple with technology to keep Church going.
- Space4 had continued to reach out with on-line activities. Demand for the foodbank had grown phenomenally.
- We have a new Space4 Manager who will help us reshape the future of the project.
- Finances – thanks to fundraising efforts last year, we started the year on a firmer financial footing but we anticipate a gap of £7,000 in 2021 so will be asking Close the Gap and the Next 900 team to help close that gap.
- The Rector posed the question ‘how will we be Church’ as we coexist with the virus. He painted the image of St Michael’s as a sailing boat setting off on a journey. Where is the wind directing it? For us as Church, God is the wind: we need to be aware continually of where God is leading us.
- We all have a role in this. The Rector’s role is to encourage us, as spiritual leader.
- The Rector finished by saying that it was his privilege to continue, with the Church community, the work which had been done at St Michael and All Angels over so many centuries.

9. Any other business

Jean Henderson offered thanks on behalf of the Church to the Rector and the Ministry Team for all they had done to keep Church alive in this place during this challenging year.

There being no other business, the APCM closed with the Grace.

Parochial Church Council 2019-20

The PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical, as well as the maintenance and upkeep of the ancient building. The PCC meets monthly throughout the year and may hold extraordinary meetings as and when they are required.

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules.

The Standing Committee of the PCC is the only committee required by law. It has the power to transact business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the PCC. The Standing Committee consists of the Rector, Church Wardens, Assistant Wardens, Treasurer and Secretary.

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

Incumbent Curate	Reverend John Barron Reverend John d'Silva
Church Wardens	Rita Turnbull, Alastair Bradley
Asst. Church Warden	Thelma Steel
Treasurer, Gift Aid Officer	Sue Bradley
Secretary	Angela Slater
Safeguarding Officer	Kevin Bond
Readers' Representative	Anne Clappison
Deanery Synod Representatives	David Hann, Dian Scott, Kevin Bond Term of Office 2020-23
Elected members	Malcolm Foster, Brian Scott, Clare Taylor Term of Office 2020-23
	Kathleen Close, Dian Scott, Lynn Scott Term of Office 2019-22
	Carole Cunningham, Sheila Foster, David Turnbull Term of Office 2018-21
Co-opted members	George Peebles Director of Music Reverend Margaret Lee, Reverend Judith Howes, Susan Elsey, Simon Hardy Term of Office 2020-23

Sidespersons:

Kathleen Armour; Kevin Bond, Alastair Bradley; Jerry Clish; Joan Findlayson; Sheila Gamble; Evelyn Garbutt; Simon Hardy; Elaine Harkness; June Hibbert; Norman Lindsay; Joan Moore; Audrey Purvis; Doreen Stoker; Rita Turnbull; Paul Armour; Pauline Coulson; Jean Henderson; Janet Rooks; Joan Bond; Betty Brown; Emily Forester; Marie Henderson; Catherine Moore; Marion Sleeman; David Turnbull.

A Year in Numbers: some facts and figures from our Mission Statistics

The covid pandemic meant that our church building was closed for a good part of the year and we had significant restrictions in place in the periods when our building was open. This has, of course, had an impact on the numbers that we report in our mission statistics – while some of these numbers are a ‘one-off’ due to covid, others show a continuing trend. All are important context as we look to the future.

The number of parishioners on the Electoral Roll was 123, compared to 129 in the previous year. Our ‘Worshipping Community’ (those who were in contact with church, through on-line services or pastoral contact) was 124 people (compared to 143 in previous year). We had a number who sadly are no longer worshipping with us, including a number of dearly loved members of our church family who died during the year. We also had some people join us in the year, including a number of people who are worshipping with us for the first time through our on-line services.

Worshipping Community

Age	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
0-17	34	40	53	11	8
18-69	148	167	37.	66	59
70+	87	88	170	66	57

During the first lockdown, when legally we were not allowed to be in the building, we established some new service offerings using Facebook and Zoom and telephone dial-in. We retained these services during periods when we were allowed a limited congregation in the building - they continue to be an important offering for our congregations who are unable to physically join us.

On a ‘usual’ Sunday (which we measured in October with restricted church opening) we had typically 31 adults worshipping in our building (compared to 93 adults and 5 children in the previous year attending multiple worship services). On ‘Feast Sunday’ in October we had 43 adults attending church for morning worship.

In addition to people attending the church building, on ‘usual’ weeks in October we had 16 adults and 4 children worshipping with us on Zoom on Sunday morning along with 19 people (‘peak viewers’)¹ worshipping on Facebook. Our Tuesday evening service typically had 11 people (‘peak viewers’) and our Thursday morning service on Zoom usually had 16 people attending (some on the application, some on telephone). On ‘Feast Sunday’ we had 40 people (peak viewers) on Facebook in the morning along with 16 people on Zoom; also 54 people (peak viewers) at the community hymn sing on Facebook that evening.

We know that there is sometimes more than one person accessing our on-line services at home and also that some people access them after they are first broadcast, so we think significant numbers of people were accessing our on-line worship.

¹ ‘Peak viewers’ is a Facebook measure of the peak number of people viewing the live film at the same time. There are other measures, such as number of views of the film of >1 min in duration during and after broadcast (this is always a larger number). We know also that there was often more than one person watching services on the same screen at the same time. ‘Peak viewers’ is a conservative estimate of the number of people accessing the service for an appreciable duration.

We conducted significant numbers of funerals last year. For part of the year we were not able to use the church building for funerals and they were at crematoria or in cemeteries. Last year we conducted 43 funerals (18 in church with a limited congregation) compared to 40 in the previous year. We held only 7 baptisms, which were permitted in the first quarter of the year (compared to a total of 48 in 2019); we were unable to hold any weddings (we held 11 in 2019).

We had 30 people attend worship in church on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day with 26 Communicants and a further 30 people taking part in individual Communion Distribution service by phone and Zoom. In addition to this, we had 77 (peak viewers) worshipping on Facebook and 54 people worshipping on Zoom (application or telephone) for our Crib Service, Christmas Carol Service, Midnight Mass and Christmas Morning Communion on-line. Copies of these services were distributed on DVD to 12 people who were unable to access them on-line.

While our Space4 building has been closed, we have worked hard at being in regular contact with people and running activities to support people through Facebook (~35 people interacting with us in a week) and towards the end of the year through Zoom groups (~25 people in a week joining these groups) as well as telephone contact. In response to significant rises in food poverty during the pandemic, we established a foodbank in the Kepier Hall. In December, in one month, we supplied 138 households with 289 bags of food, helping to feed 212 adults and 159 children from the local community. Throughout last year, we were in regular contact with 107 people from our church family through our pastoral care telephone 'cascade'.

The Year in Review - a word from our Rector

Last year was an unprecedented year in our nation's history, in the wider world and in our local communities. While extremely challenging in so many ways, I feel a great deal of admiration for the way in which our church responded to the challenges of the covid pandemic and for the commitment, creativity, faithfulness and resilience of our church people.

While our building was closed for much of the year, church was very much 'open for business' in all sorts of new and different ways. When our church buildings closed in March, we transferred our main Sunday service to the Rectory and had to quickly learn about technology! We made our services available on-line and also provided a 'dial-in' audio service via telephone for those without technology access. We used Facebook and Youtube, later moving to Zoom for some of our worship. Our ministry team very quickly began providing sermons using audio and later video; our choir began providing music using audio recording and 'Bandlab' to mix individual voices to a final song. Some of the services that we produced over the year had around 20 people contributing to them and were complex to put together. I am incredibly impressed and grateful for the hard work and dedication of our ministry team and our choir (often dealing with the inevitable frustrations of using technology) who have enabled us to continue with worship and have done so in such a creative, inclusive and considerate way.

There has been a great deal of focus on pastoral care for our church community and beyond. Our ministry team and a wider team of people ministering to our congregations have tried to support people through telephone contact, prayer support and through an enhanced offering in our parish magazine. We have also held meetings on Zoom for fellowship and book groups. We've used novels to help us grapple with some of life's 'big questions' and how they relate to our faith; and have also held a number of Bible study sessions on Zoom.

Our work with children and young people has been very restricted but we provided 'Young Church' on Zoom throughout the pandemic thanks to our talented and committed leader and the continued enthusiasm and creativity of our young folks. Over the summer, we ran treasure hunts for families with young children in Rectory Park. We have continued contact with schools in our discussions on support for families with school uniforms and technology.

We've sought to reach out and support our community in a number of ways, for example, through an 'All Souls' service for the bereaved, on-line offerings at Houghton Feast where we were joined by the Archdeacon of Sunderland and Member of Parliament in church and Lord Lieutenant and Mayor of Sunderland by video link; the evening saw us host an on-line Community Hymn Sing with contributors from neighbouring churches. In Holy Week and Easter we had services available on-line; and Advent and Christmas saw some of our traditional Crib Service and Carol Services moved on-line. Throughout all of this we have been very blessed by our music - with

not only our choir contributing but also contemporary music group and the Gilpin Singers.

A good example of our continued community involvement came in the lead up to Christmas with our 'Follow the Star' project: we sent wooden stars out to people bereaved in the year and invited them to place them on a 'Remembering Tree' outside of church – we did this through schools and undertakers and direct mailing. We sent pictures of stars out into the community with invitations to colour them and place them in windows as signs of hope. We had nativity stars in local businesses around the High Street and had a 'star trail' leading to the nativity scene outside of church. The Sunderland Echo published this good news story and enabled us to share something of the Gospel with a much wider group of people at a time when there were a fair few 'bad news' stories prominent in the press.

The Coronavirus crisis has begun to bring about a big increase in demand for the services of our community project 'Space4', with large numbers of local people facing financial pressure as well as social isolation. We had to rapidly change our delivery model from a drop-in on the high street to providing support through on-line and telephone contact and, when guidelines allowed, outdoor meetings. We held groups on Facebook and Zoom including craft-groups, yoga classes, bread-making sessions, an on-line music festival as well as creating 'well-being' films and hosting 'on-line drop-ins'. With huge increases in food poverty locally, we relocated our 'food cupboard' to the larger Kepier Hall and through covid emergency funding were able to increase our management capacity and buy supplies to provide emergency food for significant numbers of people in the community. Our new community project manager began helping us clarify the 'Next Chapter' of our Space4 project aiming to support people with growing needs in our communities while recognising the great 'assets' that we also have locally and establishing the project on a more sustainable financial footing.

There were a number of pressures on our church finances last year – most of our overheads and costs remained but a good deal of our income reduced significantly. There was a reduction in fees from occasional offices as well as collections from regular services, baptisms, funerals and weddings along with reduced opportunities for fundraising events. Our Finance Group and PCC managed the situation very well reducing costs where we could and seeking opportunities to increase income. We are very grateful for people's generosity in increased giving in the year along with people giving up their salaries and our 'Close the Gap' team and others for their great fundraising efforts. While we managed the situation well, we were not able to pay our full parish share commitment last year. In taking this tough decision, our PCC were resolved to make a firm commitment to a larger amount of share this year which we felt challenging but achievable and important to honour given previous shortfalls in payment.

During the year, there has been a lot of work 'behind the scenes' from our Administrator in the (remote) Parish Office and we are so grateful to her for her dedication, flexibility and support. Last year there was also a huge amount of work

going on in the background in the managing of church during the pandemic from our PCC and (on their behalf) our Standing Committee. Guidelines to remain safe along with legal frameworks changed frequently often at very short notice. From early in the year, our Standing Committee moved to weekly meetings (on Zoom) to enable us to manage the large amount of work in running church in lockdown. I am extremely grateful to them for their dedication, wisdom, commitment and support over this last year.

Last year had some great sadness with a number of very dear members of our church community dying in the year: we give thanks for their lives and all they have meant to us; with their loved ones we grieve their passing. We strived in the year to offer care and support to all who grieved the loss of loved ones, through covid or other reasons. We have kept our church open for funerals when we were able to when closed for other services, and have tried to offer bereavement care for people beyond the funerals themselves. We will continue to try to support people who are grieving in whatever way we can in the months and years ahead.

We are sad also that a number of people have left church or moved away from the area in the year. We are really glad though that a number of new people are part of our church family. This has included Rev'd Claire and Tim Cullingworth who had recently moved into the parish and who have become very central in our church life. Claire regularly leads worship for us – both on-line and in our church building. We are incredibly grateful to Tim for his expertise and hard work in helping set up and continuing to manage our church technology. Both have been a great blessing to us in this last year.

In July, we welcomed our new Curate Rev'd John D'Silva. While lockdown meant he had a very strange start to his curacy, John has already made some important contributions to our church life. He has worked with our families and introduced 'Sparks', a new on-line service for young children; introduced on-line Bible study groups; worked with schools enabling families to be able to access technology for remote learning; regularly supported our foodbank; led occasional offices as well as leading a host of special and regular worship for us. We are really blessed to have him with us over these next few years.

As I look over this last year, I am very heartened by our church's response in light of the covid pandemic: by the variety of talents in our people, the committed 'core' we have in our congregation that have a 'can do' attitude in the challenges and opportunities that come along in being church in such a time as this. I am also acutely aware of the great pressures, personal and corporate, that we face as God's church in this time and this place.

Being God's church in this last year has involved a lot of change, often enforced, usually surprising change. As I have sought to lead us through these times of change, I hope I have encouraged us to look to God to help us navigate the journey. Crucially in these times, if we are to work out how to flourish and how to help our local communities to flourish, we will need to look to God. We will need to seek God's guidance, God's strength, God's inspiration. It continues to be a privilege to be the

spiritual leader of this place as we continue to work out together what God is calling us to be and to do as church in these times.

**ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS
HOUGHTON LE SPRING**

**ANNUAL STATEMENT
OF ACCOUNTS**

1 JANUARY - 31 DECEMBER 2020

**PCC Treasurer
Mrs Sue Bradley**

**Independent Examiner
Mr Peter Brown**

**St Michael and All Angels Parish Church
Church Street
Houghton le Spring
DH4 4DN**

Registered Charity No. 1135095

St Michael and All Angels, Houghton le Spring

Treasurer's Annual Report for Year 1 January - 31 December 2020

Overall Bank Balance

The end of year Overall PCC Bank Accounts Balance at **31 December 2020** is **£43,956.75** the breakdown and comparison to previous year is detailed below:-

	December 2019	December 2020
PCC - Unrestricted	£33,003.70	£29,232.14
PCC - Restricted	£ 4,000.00	£11,270.00
Next 900 Account	£ 2,786.97	£ 3,454.61
TOTAL	£39,790.67	£43,956.75

CBF Legacies	£ 163.33	£ 164.10
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Assets

The PCC hold a log of all material assets and this report covers only the monetary assets.

Outstanding Liabilities

We have no outstanding liabilities.

Receipts and Payments for 2020 in comparison to previous year.

	December 2019	December 2020
Receipts	£127,009	£ 90,192
Payments	£116,826	£ 86,694

An overview breakdown of some of the main headings of Receipts and Payments and comparison to previous year is detailed below:-

Receipts	December 2019	December 2020
Planned Giving	£ 43,853	£ 43,951
Gift Aid Recovered	£ 12,892	£ 12,332
Collections	£ 13,055	£ 3,501
Donations	£ 12,881	£ 6,956
PCC Fees	£ 21,019	£ 12,237
Fundraising	£ 13,959	£ 2,232
Transfer from Restricted	£ 11,329	£ 2,230

As you will see our Planned Giving remains at a good and consistent level, overall we have 113 Regular Givers (41 Parish Giving Scheme Givers, 35 Standing Order Givers and 37 Stewardship Envelope Givers). Gift Aid recovered although claimed in 2020

relates to income from 2019 and up to 31 March 2020 so primarily before the lockdown began.

All other Receipts are down on 2019 as a direct consequence of Pandemic restrictions

Payments December 2019 December 2020

Parish Share	£ 48,623	£ 35,000
Clergy & Staffing Costs	£ 13,353	£ 13,595 (£10,689)
Repairs & Redecoration	£ 8,232	£ 2,525
Church Running	£ 27,073	£ 20,171
Transfer to Restricted	£ -	£ 9,500

The reduction in our overall payments have been mainly due to reducing the payment of our Parish Share by £13,000 (Paid £35,000 out of £48,000 original figure). The Parish Share for 2020 was paid at the level agreed by PCC in Quarter 2. We were also able to designate some funds to enable us, with some hard work, to commit to the full Parish Pledge for 2021.

Although the figure for Clergy and Staffing Costs looks slightly higher, in reality £2,906 relates to contra payments (money that was paid in and straight out again) so the actual payments figure is £10,689. We have had a full year of Rector and part year Curate expenses. Part year salary sacrifice by our Verger and Organist reduced staffing payments.

Reduced use of the Church building and careful management of maintenance and utilities lowered overall church running costs.

Restricted Budget Breakdown

Balance carried forward From 2019:

Fund for Music Events and Training	£ 2,000
Legacy	£ 2,000

Income 2020

Unpaid Parish Share from 2019	£ 7,000 (Transferred from Unrestricted)
Unpaid Parish Share from 2020	£ 1,500 (Transferred from Unrestricted)
Legacy	£ 1,000

Expenditure 2020

Equipment Purchase re streaming etc	£ 2,230	(Monies used from £3000 Legacys)
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Total Balance £11,270

Next 900 Account

Balance carried forward from 2019 £2,786.97

Income in 2020	£ 667.64
Total Balance	£3,454.61

(Please see attached detailed Receipts and Payments Accounts for Year ended 31 December 2020)

There is a Toddler Group which operates independently and who manage their own finances, the balance of their funds at the end of their year was £1,247.37.

I think we all agree that 2020 has been an unprecedented and extremely difficult year, overall we are in a stable financial position as we enter 2021. In 2021 we have agreed to pay the full Parish Pledge of £49,200 which is a considerable increase on 2020, this will be a challenge as the pandemic restrictions are still affecting our income. Hopefully we will be able to re-open gradually and safely and return to some semblance of normality as the year progresses.

Thank you to all for your generosity and support.

Sue Bradley
PCC Treasurer

St Michael & All Angels Houghton-le-Spring

Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December

2020

Receipts and Payments Accounts

	Note	Unrestricted Fund	Unrestricted Designated Fund	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2020	Total Funds 2019
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Receipts							
Voluntary receipts:							
Planned giving		43,951	-	573	-	44,524	44,601
Collections		3,501	-	-	-	3,501	13,055
Gift Aid recovered		12,332	-	-	-	12,332	12,892
All other giving/voluntary	2	8,085	-	-	-	8,085	29,515
		67,869	-	573	-	68,442	100,063
Activities for generating funds	3	3,794	-	155	-	3,949	3,843
Investment income	4	91	-	0	-	92	142
Church activities:							
Income from trading	5	4,676	-	-	-	4,676	2,882
Asset sales	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other receipts	7	13,761	-	-	-	13,761	21,643
		18,437	-	-	-	18,437	24,526
Total receipts		90,192	-	728	-	90,921	128,574
Payments							
Church activities:							
Parish share		35,000	-	-	-	35,000	48,623
Clergy and staffing costs	8	13,353	-	-	-	13,353	13,595
Church running expenses	9	20,171	-	-	-	20,171	27,073
Hall running costs	10	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mission giving and donations	11	5,128	-	-	-	5,128	8,615
Costs of trading	12	1,170	-	-	-	1,170	1,188
Repairs and redecorations	13	2,525	-	-	-	2,525	8,232
Asset purchases	14	-	-	-	-	-	-
		77,347	-	-	-	77,347	107,327
Cost of generating funds	15	9,346	-	61	-	9,407	9,576
Governance costs	16	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Outgoing Resources costs	16	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments		86,694	-	61	-	86,755	116,903
Excess of receipts over payments		3,499	-	668	-	4,166	11,671
Transfers between funds	17	(7,270)	-	9,500	-	2,230	
		(3,771)	-	10,168	-	6,396	11,671
Sale/(purchase) of investments		-	-	-	-	-	-
Cash at bank and in hand at 1 Jan		33,004	-	6,787	-	39,791	28,120
Cash at bank and in hand at 31 Dec		29,232	-	16,955	-	46,187	39,791

St Michael & All Angels Houghton-le-Spring
Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December
Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the year

	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Unrestricted Designated Fund	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2020	Total Funds 2019
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Cash funds							
Bank current account		29,232	-	14,725	-	43,957	39,791
CBF deposit fund						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
Other cash funds						-	-
		29,232		14,725	-	43,957	39,791
Other monetary assets						-	
Income tax recoverable						-	
						-	
		-	-	-	-	-	-
Investment assets							
Investment Fund Shares at market value						-	
						-	
						-	
						-	
		-	-	-	-	-	-
Assets retained for Church use						-	
						-	
						-	
						-	
						-	
		-	-	-	-	-	-
Liabilities						-	
						-	
						-	
						-	
		-	-	-	-	-	-

Payments**Church activities:**

Missionary giving and donations	11	5,128	-	-	-	5,128	8,615
Clergy and staffing costs activities	8	13,353	-	-	-	13,353	13,595
Church running costs	9	13,228	-	-	-	13,228	16,244
Church utility costs	9	6,943	-	-	-	6,943	10,829
Hall running costs	10	-	-	-	-	-	-
Costs of trading	12	1,170	-	-	-	1,170	1,188
		39,822	-	-	-	39,822	50,472

Major repairs and building works: 13

Church major repairs		-	-	-	-	-	8,232
Hall + major repairs		2,525	-	-	-	2,525	-
New building costs		-	-	-	-	-	-
		2,525	-	-	-	2,525	8,232

Asset purchases:

Purchase of fixed assets	14	-	-	-	-	-	-
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Cost of generating voluntary income: 15

Fund raising activities		1,151	-	-	-	1,151	838
Fees paid out for weddings and other services		7,685	-	-	-	7,685	8,028
Investment management costs		511	-	61	-	571	711
Bookstall costs		-	-	-	-	-	-
		9,346	-	61	-	9,407	9,576

Governance costs:

Examination/audit fee	16	-	-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-	-

Other Outgoing Resources:

Other Outgoing Resources:		-	-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-	-

Independent Examiner's Report to the members of St Michael and all Angels Parish Church, Houghton le Spring, Parochial Church Council.

I report on the annual accounts for the year ended 31st December 2020.

Respective responsibilities of the PCC and Independent Examiner

The members of the PCC consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners section 145(5) (b) of the 2011 Act; and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission.

An examination includes a review of the accounting records and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the management committee concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in a full audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matters have come to my attention

1. which give me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements

- to keep accounting records in accordance with s.130 of the 2011 Act; or
- to prepare accounts which accord with these accounting records have not been met; or

2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Peter Brown, BA(Hons)

42 Coptleigh, Houghton le Spring, Tyne & Wear, DH5 8JE

26 February 2021


SPACE4
HOUGHTON LE SPRING

ANNUAL STATEMENT
OF ACCOUNTS

1 JANUARY - 31 DECEMBER 2020

Independent Examiner
Mr Peter Brown

Space4
76 Newbottle Street
Houghton le Spring
DH4 4GB

 CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES	Charity Name Space4 Houghton-le-Spring			No (if any)		CC16a
	Receipts and payments accounts					
	For the period from	Period start date 01/01/2020	To	Period end date 31/12/2020		
Section A Receipts and payments						
	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £	
A1 Receipts						
Donations	9,106		-	9,106	4,555	
PCC Grant	4,200	-	-	4,200	4,200	
Other Grants	-	73,260	-	73,260	15,629	
Fundraising	-	-	-	-	302	
		-	-	-	-	
Other	360		-	360	1,671	
	-	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-	
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	13,666	73,260	-	86,926	26,357	
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).						
	-	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-	
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-	
Total receipts	13,666	73,260	-	86,926	26,357	
A3 Payments						
Staff Salaries	3,082	18,696	-	21,778	16,603	
Sessional Workers		2,985		2,985		
Rent		4,517		4,517	4,264	
Utilities and Overheads	452	809	-	1,261	1,789	
Materials and Activities	60	219	-	279	698	
Expenses	219	898	-	1,117	-	
Transport	-	1,054	-	1,054	-	
Food and Consumables	700	19,027	-	19,727	-	
Facilities and Equipment	120	2,382	-	2,502	3,090	
External Support	-	146	-	146	-	
Furniture				-	1,272	
Other	455	-	-	455	3,449	
Sub total	5,088	50,733	-	55,821	31,165	
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)						
	-	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-	
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-	
Total payments	5,088	50,733	-	55,821	31,165	
Net of receipts/(payments)	8,578	22,527	-	31,105	- 4,808	
A5 Transfers between funds	2,894	- 2,894	-	-	-	
A6 Cash funds last year end	16,480	2,894	-	19,374	24,183	
Cash funds this year end	27,952	22,527	-	50,479	19,375	

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank Account 33254356	27,256	22,527	-
	PayPal Statement	660		-
	Petty Cash	37		-
	Total cash funds		27,952	22,527
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	Details			
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	

Independent Examiner's Report on the Accounts

Report to the Management Committee of Space 4 on the accounts for the year ended 31st. December 2020.

Respective responsibilities of the Management Committee and Independent Examiner

The Management Committee are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year (under section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the act)) and that an independent examination is needed.

As the Independent Examiner, it is my responsibility to

- examine the accounts (under section 43(3)(a) of the Act);
- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners (under section 43(7)(b) of the Act); and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the management committee concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in a full audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matters have come to my attention

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - to keep accounting records
 - to prepare accounts which accord with these accounting recordshave not been met;
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Peter Brown BA(Hons.)
42 Coptleigh, Houghton le Spring, DH5 8JE
26 February 2021

Electoral Roll Report

The number on the Electoral Roll at last year's APCM was 129.

The number for this year, 2021, is 123. The numbers are made up as follows:

Removed from the register – 9 (4 deaths, 4 moved away and one person asked to be removed).

Added to the register – 3 (these applications came in after the 2020 Roll was completed).

Please let me know if there are any changes to addresses or telephone numbers through the year to help keep the Roll up to date.

Thank you.

Rita Turnbull
Electoral Roll Officer

Church Wardens' Report, including Fabric Report

Owing to the Covid-19 restrictions over the past year it has not been possible to check the terrier in the Church. To the best of our knowledge there are no immediate concerns about the building although there was a slipped tile which was causing a leak that has now been repaired. There is still some water ingress, in extreme weather conditions, around the tower and estimates will be sought to carry out this work in the summer months.

A video camera was purchased to assist in the broadcasting of Church services and Tim Cullingworth has enabled internet connection to the control desk in Church.

The Wardens would like to thank George Peebles and our choir for their wonderful contribution to our services especially, when possible, during the pandemic restrictions. We would also like to thank Tim Cullingworth for his professional assistance in broadcasting our online services.

The Wardens would like to thank the Ministry Team and everyone who has contributed in any way during this difficult year to maintaining the mission and ministry of St. Michael's.

Rita Turnbull and Alastair Bradley
Churchwardens

Deanery Synod report

As you will realise the Pandemic has impacted all our meetings in the Chester-le-Street and Houghton Deanery, moving everything to video meetings which has been very interesting for those of us learning this new technology.

Fundamentally, Covid19 has resulted in our planned events being cancelled pending rescheduling or being redeveloped when conditions permit.

The deanery questionnaire has been impacted by the pandemic and further action was deferred. It will probably be repeated later.

The last deanery meeting was 18th June 2020 and further meetings will be arranged when required.

We have had a Durham Diocesan Report from Dr Simon Wilkinson and I have included a section from Bishop Paul's address reflecting on the Waymark conference, setting our priorities for the following five years and therefore our Next Steps.

Waymark - Next Steps (Duncan Podbury)

- a. Context: This was part of the consultation on the next five years' strategic plan. The 'Plan on a Page' is the strategic document for the Diocese; it provides an overview of our organisation for our partners and external agencies and focuses our energies and resources towards our stated aims. Our three priorities from 2016-2020 were poverty; growing Churches; and children and young people. Is the 'plan on a page' properly understood? Some aspects are "diluted" for clarity, other perhaps forgotten, and connections are not always easy to discern.
- b. Key outcomes of the Waymark report:
 - i. that we need to be better at defining the role of the Diocese, and that we need a louder voice campaigning.
 - ii. Strategic priorities still resonate, and environmental stewardship is an emerging additional priority.
 - iii. A new relationship between lay and clergy, with deepening discipleship
 - iv. Pastoral and missional community engagement (not just Church members acting as social workers, but leading others to Jesus)
 - v. Greater and deeper communication between Parish and Deanery (in both directions)
 - vi. Better alignment of resources to priorities.

As the pandemic settles so our work as Christians is much needed to demonstrate enduring Love and Grace

Simon Hardy on behalf of the Synod Team

PCC Secretary's Report

In the good old days, PCC members physically gathered for their monthly PCC meetings in the choir vestry in Church, and the PCC Standing Committee – the Rector, Church Wardens, Deputy Church Warden, Treasurer and Secretary – also met once a month, to deal with any matters which couldn't wait until the PCC meeting. And then came the pandemic... After a faltering start, Zoom became the order of the day for both PCC and Standing Committee meetings, and I am pleased to report that the work of the PCC has continued more or less uninterrupted.

The Rector decided that the Standing Committee should meet weekly, as so many interim decisions needed to be taken about how St Michael and All Angels could continue to be Church during the Covid-19 restrictions. Full PCC meetings continued to be held monthly, with the occasional additional meeting when major decisions – such as whether our Church buildings should close or remain open – were discussed at length.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting which was scheduled for April 2020 eventually took place on 25th October 2020, in blended form (i.e. a blend of a small-scale, socially-distanced physical meeting in Church and a linked Zoom meeting).

In total, the full PCC has met (in one form or another!) on 13 occasions between March 2020 – the beginning of lockdown – and March 2021. As would be expected, pandemic-related have matters featured prominently on every agenda; and we have continued to give due attention to important standing agenda items such as Safeguarding and the Church Finances. We have managed to progress other business, too, including:

- Developing our thinking of what it will mean for St Michael's to be on the Northern Saints pilgrimage route
- The adoption of a Whistleblowing Policy
- The introduction of a managed payroll system for Church employees
- The future of our Space4 project, including the appointment of a new Space4 Manager
- Updating the Church's IT equipment to support online worship
- Planning for a socially distanced Houghton Feast Civic Service
- Responding to the new 'Guided Pledge' Parish Share system
- Planning for socially-distanced Advent/Christmas worship and seasonal community activities
- Agreeing a revised approach to administering the Garden of Remembrance
- The adoption of a Legacies Policy

We look forward to being able to meet in person once again once Covid-19 restrictions are a thing of the past. Meanwhile, we will continue to Zoom along!

Angela Slater
PCC Secretary

Safeguarding Report 2021

Safeguarding Training

Level	Training Complete this Year	Training Required Next Year
Awareness (C0)	3	42
Foundation (C1)	0	6
Leadership (C2)	3	2

Disclosure and Barring Checks

Total This Reporting Period	Total Due Next Reporting Period
3	8

Reported Safeguarding Items

Reported This Period	Total Open and being Managed
3	2

Safeguarding Policy

PCC reviewed and recommitted to Diocese and Parish Safeguarding Policy.

Officers continue to assess all aspect of the Parish Safeguarding Policy to ensure full compliance with the requirements. An improvement plan is in place and monitored regularly for progress on the implementation of necessary changes.

Church leaders and officers are made aware of any safeguarding concerns via the reporting arrangements set out in the Church's Safeguarding Policy. The policy also provides for robust arrangements for the appropriate recording and effective management of those incidents either internally or where appropriate with the support of the Diocese Safeguarding Advisor or other 3rd party agencies.

None of the known reported concerns relate to any services or activities provided by Church. All recorded items relate to external incidents reported to the Church officials who are offering and providing pastoral care to those involved.

Key Activities

Area	Description
Young Church	Safeguarding Risk Assessment developed and implemented to support online delivery
Space 4	Safeguarding Risk Assessment developed and implemented to support online delivery
Church Services	PCC taking an active role in assessing safeguarding risks to ensure services can be delivered safely in line with ever changing Government and Diocesan guidelines.
Associated Trusts	Trusts and associated organisations continue to be engaged with regard the adoption of Church Safeguarding Policy

Kevin Bond
Safeguarding officer

REPORTS FROM THE CHURCH AFFILIATED ORGNISATIONS

Prepared for the
2021 Annual Parochial Meeting

Ladies' Time Out/In Report

After having been in lockdown for quite a few months and being unable to hold our usual meeting in the Mill, we decided to have a Ladies' Zoom Christmas Night on 8th December. It was a great night with lots of chat, nibbles and drink enjoyed by most of our regulars plus some newcomers. Following upon the success of that evening we are continuing our unusual Ladies' Time Out/In on the 1st Friday of each month at 7.30 pm on Zoom - and looking forward to when we can go out socially again to the Mill Pub for a meal, drink and fellowship. Hopefully in the future we will resume our regular Tuesday evening nights out.

All ladies are very welcome - it would be lovely if you could join us.

Sheila Foster

Signpost

As with all other aspects of Church life, 2020/21 has been a challenging year with many changes required to keep pace with COVID 19 regulations. For a large period of the year we have needed to post our magazine to customers, as using our distribution team to deliver was against government advice. Fortunately, the cost of postage has been sponsored and for that we give thanks.

The production of Signpost, as you will be aware, is a team effort. My thanks go to Steve (producer), Philippa (office co-ordinator and printer), and the 20 or so distributors who brave the elements to bring our magazine to the people of Houghton. My special thanks go to our Church family, including clergy, who get pressured every month by me to contribute copy, without which there would be no witness to the life of St Michael's for our readership to enjoy. May we all continue our recovery from this dreadful pandemic and move forward to more positive times when the activities of our church are reflected in articles that express the love for each other that may recently have been suppressed.

Malcolm Foster

Light

Light, the bereavement group, has been unable to meet since February 2020 due to the Covid pandemic. Members of the group have regularly been contacted by telephone, and they are all looking forward to a return of the group post Covid. I am anticipating a rise in numbers from people bereaved during the pandemic for whom the normal family channels of bereavement support have been greatly restricted.

Margaret Lee

Young Church Report

As with many organisations this year, Young Church has faced a challenge of delivering Sunday sessions online.

Initially we began hosting our own Zoom sessions weekly at 11am with a group of about 6/7 children who were regular Young Church members. These lasted about 15-20 mins and involved listening to the Gospel story and then completing a craft after the session. The children then sent a photo of their craft to me and the images (of the craft) were shared on the Church Facebook page for the congregation to see.

Since then, however, just as in Church we have embedded our session within the main service. Currently a 'Service of the Word' takes place via Zoom each Sunday morning at 11am and through the power of technology in the middle of the service we (Young Church Members) are transported into a virtual breakout room. Within the 'room' we share songs, Gospel stories, our events of the week and complete a craft. At a relevant point in the service we are taken back to the main service and we virtually share the craft and talk about our session with the congregation – as we used to do in Church.

We have a regular group of 3 or 4 children taking part each Sunday morning.

Clare Taylor

Telephone Network

This has been a huge innovation over the period of the Covid pandemic. Following the first lockdown in March 2020 the Ministry Team put into place a team of telephone people who would contact members of our congregation. Initially this was targeted to those who were already on our home visiting list, together with those who lived on their own. After a short period this list was expanded to include everyone we could think of, i.e. all who were on the Electoral Roll and also members of groups associated with Church e.g. the MU and Light. The telephone team includes our clergy: Judith, John D'Silva and myself; our Readers: Anne, Sue and Ros; and our APA's: Thelma, Elaine and Evelyn, together with Kathleen Close, Jean Henderson, Emily Forester and Joan Beattie (MU). We each phone ten or more people on a regular basis. All have expressed their appreciation of the calls and for those who are isolated it has been a lifeline. The system has helped us to keep abreast of the pastoral needs and problems of the congregation and their families, feeding into our prayers. The scheme was also published in the Signpost to pick up those we had overlooked and were not on the Electoral Roll. In total, we are regularly in touch with over 112 people.

My grateful thanks to all our phoners for continuing such a fantastic service.

Margaret Lee

Hand-bells

The hand-bell team have been unable to meet throughout the pandemic due to restrictions. Looking forward to when we can get together again.

Carole Cunningham

Gilpin Singers

In line with many other groups, it has been a very different year for the Gilpin Singers! To enable the ladies to keep in touch with one another a WhatsApp group was set up in the first lockdown, offering an opportunity for social contact. Our conductor, Laura, also sends regular emails to all in the choir.

As time went on most of the ladies were now becoming more efficient with Zoom technology and so it was decided to try out having the choir meet via this platform. After a few teething problems it has been a popular alternative way to have practice sessions for those who wished to meet. After a while some of the ladies made a recording of 'Silent Night', which was beautifully put together by Laura and used at St Michael's service on Christmas Eve. Recordings were also made of 'O, Holy Night' and 'My Gift, My Offering'. Thank you to Laura for all her hard work in putting these together.

A recording of the previous year's Christmas Concert was also posted on Facebook, a happy walk down memory lane.

In the New Year the Zoom sessions restarted with a summer programme. When and where we will be able to get back together is uncertain, but the ladies remain committed.

In September Nikki left the Gilpin Singers' Committee. We would like to take this opportunity to thank her for her sterling work over the past years in her invaluable support for the choir.

Carole Cunningham

Mothers' Union

Unfortunately, the Mothers' Union members were not able to meet during the lockdown.

Our last meeting was February 2020 when 30 members enjoyed the annual lunch at the Board Inn, although it was a snowy day and some members did cancel. We invited Ruth Masters along as a small thank you for her friendship and support to Kathleen Nash.

I kept in contact with the members by email and phone calls. Members receive the Mothers' Union News booklet. I was able to hand deliver to members within walking distance and others were posted.

The December booklet contained 2021 Prayer Diary Dates and a Christmas prayer:

May God's promise of a hope-filled future comfort and bless you and those you will miss this Christmas.

May the Guiding light of God rekindle your confidence to journey forward with others and serve the world.

We do not have any plans in place for 2021 as yet. After talking to some members over the past weeks they all have said that although they have had a vaccine, they would feel more comfortable returning to meetings later in the year if and when the numbers of Covid-19 cases reduce dramatically.

Joan Beattie, Mothers' Union Leader

2nd Houghton Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers

Eighteen Guides and Rangers had a weekend in York in February 2020 which they enjoyed. We went to various attractions including the Yorvik museum, Chocolate Story museum and York Dungeons.

Unfortunately, after this weekend away we have had to close the units due to the Covid pandemic. We had an adventure weekend planned for the Brownies in April but we had to rebook that to take place, hopefully, in May 2021.

We did manage to meet up with each section during the summer for a couple of weeks but, unfortunately, we were then told to close again.

We have set a couple of challenges for the girls to complete at home and posted out their badges. They have completed the "Christmas Countdown Challenge" and are completing "Home Sweet Home Challenge" at the moment.

Sheila Wynne

'Open the Book'

It is difficult to report anything about 'Open the Book' as the last school visits were on 3rd March 2020 to Gillas Lane School and on 4th March 2020 to Burnside School. Then COVID-19 took over and nothing has been possible since. I would just like to reiterate that we have a good team of dedicated people who go into the schools to read stories and to help the children act out these stories but we are always looking for new members to join us. Hopefully it won't be too much longer before we can continue our Open the Book stories and after our enforced absence we will be more than ready to return.

Rita Turnbull, Coordinator

'Sparks'

Sparks is one of the offerings for children and young people at Church. Every month a set of craft activities is posted or delivered to families. A video is also released on Facebook with the bible story for the month and a song.

The group began in October and was a replacement for Mini-Michael's which had not met since March. Currently, there are 13 families including 19 children in the 1-11 age range who receive activity packs. Some of the families were previously part of Mini-Michael's and other families are connected with Church through baptisms and Space4. The format for Sparks will be regularly reviewed in response to what can be done in person. For the time being, I am grateful to Anne Goodman and her granddaughters for recording a story each month and to Ros Pickersgill for producing a song.

Reverend John d'Silva

Sidespersons

Most of the people on the Sidespersons Rota have been unable to be present at services this year due to being in vulnerable categories and advised not to come to Church.

We have, therefore, formed a reduced rota consisting of: Elaine Harkness, Evelyn Garbutt, Sheila Gamble, Jean Henderson, Simon Hardy and Kevin Bond, aided by Rita Turnbull and Alastair Bradley. Their duties have consisted of showing people to their designated seats and guiding them through the one-way system and to Communion, also ensuring that safe distancing and the wearing of masks are adhered to.

Many thanks to all of those involved as without them we would not have been able to gather in Church during these challenging months; and to Rita and David Turnbull for stewarding the Christmas Day services.

Hopefully it won't be too many months before normal service can be resumed and we will be able to welcome back all of our sidespersons.

Last Orders (Men's night out)

This is my report covering 2020. At the start of the year we began a new venue, the Wild Boar! Houghton Rugby Club was going through a hard time. After the rugby training on Monday nights for the juniors, there was no one left in the club except us, and economically it was not viable, believe it or not we don't drink enough!!!!. To avoid a financial loss they close at 9 on Mondays. This coincided with an urge, an urge to try something "new". Throwing caution to the wind we migrated to the Wild Boar. Monday nights are usually quiet so we easily take over a large table and discuss the ways of the world. The new venue seemed to work well with there being a convivial atmosphere. We enjoyed three months of our new location and then..... the rest is history.

Alastair Bradley, Organiser.

The Friends of Houghton Hillside Cemetery

We started the year positively, planning open days and events over the spring and summer and working out what form our AGM would take. A special event was planned for Cemeteries in 2020. Fortunately for us all our planning was on paper and we didn't incur any expense when events didn't go ahead.

We have heard reports of local people keeping the cemetery tidy during the summer, making it part of their daily exercise routine, which is great news.

As some of our committee members are clinically vulnerable there was no way we were going to risk any meeting or events during the pandemic. The irony was not lost on us. The Hillside Cemetery was opened up because the Church yard was full and there was an urgent need of burials due to the Cholera outbreak which spread from Sunderland.

We will start again once the restrictions are lifted.

Alastair Bradley, Chair.

Liturgical Choir

What a year for the Church and choir!

The Sunday before the first lockdown four choir members and Frances met in the Church to record some of the music the choir had been preparing for Lent and our Passion Sunday service. We managed to record music that was used throughout Lent and Passiontide.

During the lockdowns the choir have been recording hymns at home using BandLab. It's not the easiest thing to do! In between lockdowns, when permitted, we recorded a socially distant choir for future use. We are thankful for Nikki and her expertise in pulling all the voices and organ together. The Church now has a large library of hymns, songs and chants we can use during this time.

We were disappointed not to have our usual concerts in May. Many people have been disappointed, especially the singers - thinking of the Gilpin Singers - brass bands and Gordon Stewart, who all had concerts cancelled.

Many of our services such as Feast Evensong, Community Hymn Singing, Advent and Christmas Carol Services went ahead 'on-line', all put together by the Rector, Curate John, and Nikki, with filming done by Tim Cullingworth. I know many people enjoyed our efforts. While the Church was open some of the choir sang at the Sunday Eucharist, a complicated affair with music, face masks and hand gel, keeping in line with the regulations!

I would like to thank the choir for their commitment and support at this difficult time. Hopefully we will all get back to some sort of normality soon!

I would like to say a thank you to Rector John for his support and encouragement trying to maintain our great music tradition at St Michael's using modern technology!

Space4 Women

What a strange and unsettling journey we have all been on during the last twelve months – sometimes completely awful and sometimes really quite enjoyable. Our Monday afternoon group of ladies have fortunately all been reachable by telephone (or other means if technically competent) so I have been able to keep in touch with them regularly.

It has been a joy to discover all the sometimes weird but mostly wonderful ways in which we are all coping. Unfortunately some have been, and still are, experiencing health problems, either themselves or within their family, and so we add them to the Church prayer list and to our own, whilst trying to support where we can.

Our habit of drinking tea or coffee and eating cake and biscuits does not appear to have diminished, in fact quite the opposite, I sense, and my goodness, the length of the 'phone calls has certainly increased!

Hoping and praying for better times to come so that we can again meet together on a Monday afternoon at Space4.

Anne Goodman

Kepier Management Committee

The Kepier building, in keeping with most other such community venues, has suffered hugely from the absence of most of the people and events that are our life blood. Our Manager, following the receipt of a very comprehensive 'Book of rules and regulations', has worked extremely hard in difficult circumstances to make the building accessible in a Covid-safe way, so that some of our tenants have been able to work within it.

Whilst waiting for some form of normality to return we have sanctioned certain works to proceed. A new path around part of the outside has been laid, enabling a one-way system to be put in place. The outside paintwork has been refreshed and a very large programme of repair to two areas of the roof completed. Some smaller inside rooms have been decorated and new floor covering laid. We are most grateful for the determined work of Jean Henderson who, after approaching several Trusts and Sunderland City Council, was rewarded by their generosity in supplying grants, enabling the work to proceed.

Sadly, for most of the last year all our uniformed organisations, Toddlers and small community groups have been unable to meet, and of course no events of any sort have been possible.

On a more positive note, we are privileged to be hosting the Space4 Food bank which, with a dedicated group of helpers, has been operating throughout the pandemic, serving the community.

We wish everyone well and look forward to welcoming the young, old and not so old members of our community back again to our 'ancient and modern' building.

Anne Goodman

Friends of Houghton Parish Church Trust

2020 has been a year like no other, not just for this Church, town and country, but globally. Everyone has had to make huge sacrifices, sadly some more than others, and particularly those who have lost loved ones because of the pandemic. The Friends have felt the loss of loyal and devoted members who will be remembered for their dedication to our beloved Church.

The Friends were forced to cancel what was going to be a spectacular musical weekend in May which would have included some amazing new talents.

The work of the Church continues, and unfortunately the deterioration to our ancient building still occurs. The Church Wardens are obtaining estimates for urgent work that is required to the building and the Friends Trust has agreed to give financial assistance towards this work. We can't stress enough how important our members' contributions are to the Friends and you may be interested to know that since the Friends' inception in 1993 the Trust has donated around £67,500 towards the Church's upkeep and restoration.

The Trustees of the Friends decided to have some Christmas cards and blank cards printed during the pandemic and this fundraising opportunity has been very successful.

If you are not already a Friend perhaps you may consider becoming a member from as little as £10 per annum to enable the continuing maintenance of this important local landmark.

Jean Henderson

St Michael's Toddler Group

St Michael's Toddler Group was operating as normal until March, but sadly our group has been closed since the beginning of the Covid pandemic. When restrictions were temporarily lifted last year, it was agreed that the risks to our staff, children and their carers were too great to reopen at that stage. We will only reopen when it is safe for us all to do so, which hopefully will be later this year.

Sheila Partridge

Our Space4 Community Project

As with many organisations this has been a difficult year and there will be a testing time ahead as we strive to move forward post-pandemic. However, this also creates an importance that projects such as Space 4 continue to empower community and shine a light of hope, security and help to those who need it.

In the last year, the services we offer through Space4 had to transition very quickly using social media as a way of connecting to those who have been isolated. And with this in mind we are thankful for the work of the Space4 employees and volunteers who have been steadfast in continuing to link with those who have needed help. This also includes our foodbank which has greatly served our community over the last 12 months.

2020

At the beginning of the year, we started out with substantial growth, particularly in the drop in and workshops. We continued with our regular drop-in plus further groups that were more specific:

- groups for men
- women
- craft, cake & chat
- ceramic making classes.

In January we had an average weekday attendance of 43, rising to 47 in the month of February, with an average for the year up to the beginning of the first lockdown of 45 people.

In March we had the pleasure of the Bishop of Durham, the Rt Revd Paul Butler, visiting Space4 on St Patrick's Day. This was also the last day that our building was open due to the pandemic and lockdown restrictions. At this point, we were able to diversify our provision and began to provide drop-ins online through social media. The switch to social media enabled us to specifically help individuals as they struggled with social isolation and loneliness and to support them through wellbeing activities.

We also offered general videos on Facebook which provided thoughts, reflections, and poems, and in our Facebook live feature we offered a provision that could bring connectivity and positivity during an exceedingly difficult time.

In May 2020, one of our invaluable volunteers ran a two-day online Space4 festival which featured artists from all over the country giving their time to entertain, which included juggling and artwork.

As we moved into the Summer months, which brought with it a relaxing of the lockdown restrictions, we were able to offer a number of small socially distanced outside events including a men's group and Cake and Chat group, which both met outside the Kepier Hall. We also ran a treasure hunt in Rectory Park for families with young children from the wider community to attend.

Foodbank

Over the last year we have learned many things, not least that many families in our community struggle with food poverty. This issue was further exasperated by the loss of jobs during the pandemic. Therefore, in addition to the wellbeing provision we offered, we also provided a foodbank facility to assist those in need through food poverty. The foodbank has grown substantially with 1696 Adults and 1061 children benefitting from food provision.

One important aspect of understanding the issues faced in our community was to be able to ask questions. Through a grant from the Durham Community Fund, we were able to collect feedback from those accessing our provision, which gave us much better insight into the challenges of food poverty.

Staff

In August 2020 Space4 recruited several staff including a Foodbank Coordinator and a temporary Assistant Manager.

Christine Britcliffe, who led the Space4 family and successfully steered the charity through a period of significant growth, stood down as Space4 manager and was succeeded by Andrea Haynes.

Funding

Over 2020 we received funding and donations from various organisations including Sunderland City Council, Fare Share, Durham Community fund, St Matthew's Church Newbottle, The Soroptimists, Houghton Rotary, B&M and the Coronavirus Community Support Fund (a government grant awarded through the Lottery Community Fund). The latter significant grant proved vital to the sustainment of online resources and our foodbank provision. We also received funding from Northumbria Police, which provided activity packs for families with children and support for vulnerable people to manage mental health during the lockdown period.

A glimpse of the future

In this new year we're excited to announce a 5-year project, 3 of which have been funded by the Lottery Reaching Communities Grant – we've called this project 'Space4U'. This opportunity will lead us into further empowerment of our community through asset-based work with a real emphasis on understanding people's strengths rather than needs.

Over several months of consultation, we have identified three areas which will be our focus over the coming years:

1. Working together creatively to respond to food poverty

Over this last year we have acted more reactively to alleviating food poverty by delivering food bags to residents. We believe that we need to adjust this method as it can be detrimental to customers progressing with their lives when they rely too heavily on food donations. We also feel that people in poverty deserve a choice and access to education in nutrition and health. We also believe it is important to involve customers more tangibly in getting involved in the project: volunteering and participation will drive forward transformation, rather than just delivering a service to them.

2. Responding to isolation & anxiety particularly among the elderly and those who feel marginalized

Over the last year we have been responding to the needs of people who have had increased anxiety exasperated by the COVID-19 pandemic. These issues already existed in our community with disproportionately those aged over 65 experiencing social isolation. As we begin to come out of lockdown, we wish to continue to offer a service where individuals can feel safe and secure, but also create activities that build confidence and a sense of inclusion and friendship. Pre-pandemic our hub was serving over 100 people per week through drop-ins and activities, and this project pre-empts the strong need that will occur in integrating back into normality, to create links for those who have been isolated for a year.

3. Working with our community to respond to inequalities particularly those affecting children and young people

Throughout the last year we have been able to begin to understand inequalities that have come to light, particularly in uniform poverty, food poverty and digital poverty. Therefore, the project will tackle these three areas:

Foodbank – With the new format of the Food Store, families will have more choice in what they need in terms of food, but also access to healthy meal plans particularly for children.

Café and digital hub – Children and families will be able to access social activities in both the hub and café, with the facility of technology should it be required.

Conclusion

Over the coming months we will see a return to drop-ins and workshops in our Newbottle Street centre, and as we work through the next few years, we will launch our community store and our children's recycled uniform shop as well as a community cafe. In conjunction with this we will begin to create a team of 'community builders'

and 'connectors' who will be embedded in our community and begin the work of listening and learning the stories, hopes, skills and talents of local people.

Our hope is that the work we are taking on now will be a real blessing to individuals, our wider community and our church community for many years to come.



