



ST BRANDON'S PARISH CHURCH, BRANCEPETH

**ANNUAL REPORT
(INCLUDING ACCOUNTS)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024**

Priest-in-Charge:

Revd Canon Anna Brooker
(to 20 October 2024)

Lay Chair:

Mike Higton

Banks:

The Co-operative Bank PLC
PO Box 101
1 Balloon Street
Manchester
M60 4EP

&

CCLA
One Angel Lane
London
EC4R 3AB

Background

St Brandon's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent (Revd Canon Anna Brooker, to 20 October 2024) in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC also has responsibility for maintaining the churchyard.

Reference and Administrative Details

Members of PCC are either ex-officio, elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), or coopted by the PCC, in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. During the year the following served as members of the PCC:

Ex-officio

Priest-in-charge: Revd Canon Anna Brooker, Chair (until 20.10.24)

Associate Minister: Revd Alison Hobbs

Reader: Geoff Moore

Churchwarden: Carol Beeby

Churchwarden: David Eltringham (until 7.9.24)

Churchwarden (and Lay Chair): Mike Higton (from 8.9.24)

Deanery Synod Representative: Caroline Middleditch (until 2.2.24)

Deanery Synod Representative: Peter Bailey (from 28.4.24)

Deanery Synod Representative: Jane Stout (from 28.4.24)

Elected membership (up to 9 members)

Janette Foxe (elected 2020, 2023)

Mike Higton, Treasurer, co-opted (until 7.9.24)

Tom Hobbs (until 28.4.24)

Kenneth Howe (elected 2022)

Catrin Morgan (elected 2023)

Sue Morgan (co-opted 2018; elected 2019, 2022)

Colin Waterman, Secretary (elected 2023)

Objectives and Activities

The statement of purpose for St Brandon's is:

- to provide opportunities for encounter between God and people;
- to offer silence, sacrament, celebration and recollection for all phases of human need and searching;
- to provide a prayerful, caring, safe and learning environment;
- to be a welcoming, inclusive and invigorating community;
- to reach out to local, national and international concerns with prayer and practical help; and
- to seek peace and reconciliation with the help of God's grace.

The primary activities revolve around the provision of specific opportunities for encounter between God and people, especially services for worship, celebration and recollection in which God is encountered and received in sacrament and word, including:

- the Eucharist;
- services of morning and evening prayer;
- baptisms, marriages and funerals; and
- thanksgivings, blessings and other occasional offices.

Within regular services there needs to be an opportunity for all ages to encounter and receive from God.

Other activities which flow from this, and which also directly support the statement of purpose, are as follows:

- a prayer network that supports the work of the church in all its manifestations;
- opportunities, usually in groups, to hear, explore and practise the Christian faith;
- opportunities for catechism for baptism and confirmation, and for marriage preparation;
- pastoral care to and beyond members of the church community; and
- opportunities for private prayer and devotion.

In addition, the church has developed vocational activities through provision for:

- young people from the village and beyond;
- visitors and pilgrims;
- education / training days / non-residential conferences;
- quiet days / non-residential retreats;
- concerts / organ recitals / bell ringing and other musical events; and
- exhibitions and festivals.

Structure, Governance and Management

Committees

The PCC operates through several committees and teams, the most significant of which are:

Standing Committee

This is the only committee required by law. It has the power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any decision given by the PCC.

Fabric & Finance Committee

This was formed in 2018 to take over the role of the former Fabric Committee and to incorporate oversight of the church's financial affairs. Its terms of reference were last reviewed in March 2025.

Worship Team

This team handles practical matters relating to the worship of the church, covering both the regular Sunday services and various additional services at festivals, and keeping in touch with the Messy Church team. Its terms of reference were last reviewed in March 2025.

Admin Team

This team was formed in 2009 to deal with communications and daily running of the church, including church hire, the monthly newsletter delivered to every household in the parish, the website and, more recently, social media. Its terms of reference were last reviewed in March 2025.

Risk management

The PCC is responsible for the management of the risks faced by St Brandon's Church. Risks are identified and controls established throughout the year. A formal review of the risk and management processes is undertaken on an annual basis.

The key controls used include:

- formal agendas for all committee activity;
- detailed terms of reference for all committees;
- formal written policies;
- clear authorisation and approval levels; and
- formal risk assessments.

Through the risk management processes established for St Brandon's Church, the PCC is satisfied that all major risks have been identified and have been adequately mitigated where necessary. It is recognised, however, that this can provide only reasonable assurance that major risks have been adequately managed.

Financial policies

The PCC has a policy of holding between four- and six-months' running costs in unrestricted reserves, which at present equates to around £22,000 to £33,000. This is sufficient to meet the day-to-day needs of the organisation and to ensure financial stability, whilst not retaining excessive funds that should be used towards the purpose of the organisation.

The PCC holds four restricted funds:

- the Appeal Fund, which was raised following the fire in 1998 and is to be used for the restoration and repair of the church building;
- a Heritage Lottery Fund, which was established to hold grant receipts for a stonework repair project, and now holds funds reserved for the upkeep of the church fabric;
- a Tower Fund, which contains funds dedicated for maintenance of the bells and support of bell ringing; and
- a Charitable Donations Fund, which is used for temporarily holding funds which have been given to the church for onward donation to other charities.

Grant-making policy

Each year the PCC makes grants of up to 10% of unrestricted income to a small number of selected charitable bodies whose aims are in accordance with St Brandon's stated objectives, and especially the objective 'To reach out to local, national and international concerns with prayer and practical help'. The list of charities supported is reviewed by the PCC each year. The PCC does not accept applications for grants from individuals or organisations.

Authorisation limits

The treasurer is authorised to make all routine/expected payments in relation to existing church activities. The treasurer is also authorised to make payments of up to £250 on unexpected expenditure, where that expenditure clearly arises from the ordinary pursuit of existing church activities. The Fabric & Finance Committee is authorised to agree expenditure up to £500 on matters relating to the routine upkeep of the

building and churchyard. Any proposed expenditure above these limits is agreed in advance by PCC or (in an emergency) by Standing Committee. Where necessary, such agreement may be sought by circulation.

Safeguarding

St Brandon's PCC has adopted the Church of England and Diocese of Durham policies regarding safeguarding and has put in place safeguarding policies and procedures consistent with these. All members of the church involved in work with children and vulnerable adults have undertaken diocesan training to the required level. All members of the church involved in work with children and vulnerable adults have appropriate and up-to-date DBS checks. A safeguarding checklist is completed annually and submitted to Standing Committee and the PCC. Policy and procedure is followed in the event of any safeguarding concerns that arise, and such concerns are reported to the PCC and shared appropriately with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. The PCC follows Safer Recruitment and People Management processes, in line with Church of England requirements, for all the church's volunteers and teams.

Data protection

St Brandon's PCC follows a Data Protection Policy, published on the church website, along with a Data Privacy Notice. These are reviewed annually.

The Proceedings of the PCC and Mission and Ministry of the Church in 2024

PCC

The PCC met six times in 2024 to discuss and support all the activities mentioned below. All meetings were well attended, and a summer social was held at the Rectory. Throughout the year the work of the various committees and groups reporting back to PCC was discussed. Information was received from Admin Team, the Climate Action Group, Fabric & Finance Committee, the Partnership for Missional Church group, the Parish Safeguarding Officer, Worship Team, and the leaders of Messy Church, Sunday School and Youth Club. We are grateful to all who work in these areas for the time they give to the church's mission, ministry and maintenance.

The Electoral Roll was last revised in 2019. The number on the Roll in April 2024 was 97.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Electoral Roll	111	96	99	99	99	96	97

Worship

Throughout the year, the church provided services of worship and prayer. Service leadership and preaching were shared between the Priest-in-Charge, the Associate Minister, the Reader, the Revd Fiona Eltringham, the Revd Jane Grieve, Dr Hester Higton, Prof Mike Higton, the Revd Sue Hope, placement ordinands and occasional visiting preachers. This worship was supported by teams of sidespeople and sacristans, whose input is much appreciated.

Alongside the normal Sunday morning services (a small number of which were non-eucharistic Services of the Word), we enjoyed an Ash Wednesday service; a Palm Sunday procession from the crossroads, led by a local donkey; contemplative eucharists on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week; a Maundy Thursday service with foot-washing; several Good Friday and Easter services, including the Dawn Vigil; an Ascension Day service; an Evensong with St John's College Choir; a service to mark the first anniversary of the Israel / Palestine conflict; an All Souls' Day service; a Remembrance service with two-minutes' silence; and a new liturgy for the Christmas Eve Midnight service.

Morning Prayer was shared daily, Monday to Friday, both in-person and via Zoom, including prayers for the parish, diocese, mission partners and individual needs. An online service of evening prayer was provided fortnightly until the summer. A midday eucharist was provided most weekdays in the Castle Chapel, under the auspices of the Community of the Well. Home communion services were provided as requested.

The livestreaming of services continued on Sunday mornings and for some seasonal services, much valued by a handful of regulars and other online visitors, but increasing pressures on members of the Tech Team led to the frequency of streaming being reduced in the autumn. We are grateful to the Tech Team for their work on this.

Regular services (excluding holidays and special occasions) typically attracted between 40 and 45 adults and around 3 children and young people, with a handful of others joining online or watching the recording later. Messy Church attracted between 6 and 15 adults, and between 10 and 18 children. Attendance at major festivals was higher. For example, 74 people attended worship at services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Regular services	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Adults	49	50	50	50	45	46	47	45
Children	5	5	4	4	2	4	6	3

PCC and Worship Team regularly reviewed all aspects of our worship. We are grateful to many people 'behind the scenes' who contributed to church life through the year: the Flower Guild, the cleaning teams and those who open and close the church each day. St Brandon's remained open to visitors every day, with comments left which show the real impact of the peace and beauty of the building.

Prayer and pastoral care

Alongside all the prayer involved in the services described above, the Prayer and Pastoral Team

- ☐ responded to specific prayer requests;
- ☐ contributed to the monthly Newsletter 'prayer space';
- ☐ contacted and visited the sick and bereaved; and
 - sent cards and flowers to mark life events and anniversaries.

Throughout the year, visitors left prayer requests in the Neville Chapel, which were noted and echoed at Morning Prayer each Thursday.

Those recently bereaved were invited to the All Souls service, and baptism and wedding contacts were invited to other suitable church services and events.

Occasional offices

As a Church of England parish church, we are available to our parishioners and members for baptisms, weddings and funerals, and we try to ensure that those who come for a service of celebration or at a time of sadness have a positive experience of church.

In 2024:

- three babies and children were baptised;
- one couple was married;
- eight funerals were held in church.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Baptisms	10	8	9	7	3	1	9	4	7	3
Weddings	6	7	4	4	1	0	2	1	2	1
Funerals	5	6	4	2	3	0	2	3	3	8

Partnership for Missional Church

During 2024, the Diocesan Enabling Team (ET) led the PMC core group through Phase 2 (Experimenting) and Phase 3 (Focusing) of the PMC process. The core group focused its attention on building closer relationships with the wider community. In June 2024, the core group met with representatives of the various village groups. One key recommendation was that the St Brandon's newsletter should be expanded to become a Parish Newsletter, to encompass the activities of the village as a whole. St Brandon's was also invited to participate in the Village Hall Centenary Exhibition in November, which provided an opportunity to advertise church activities.

The involvement of the ET ceased at the end of 2024, but the PMC project will continue to seek God's preferred and promised future for our church. A final Cluster meeting in December was held at St Brandon's and attended by participating churches, both past and present.

Children, young people and families

Sunday School continued to share the Good News with children 'old enough to enjoy a story', using drama and craft activities, led by one male and one female leader each week. Two children attended regularly, with numbers increasing on baptism weeks. Sunday School ran throughout the year, with short breaks over the school holidays.

Messy Church met monthly and remained a significant part of St Brandon's worshipping community. The Messy Church team provided activities in the Castle grounds at the Craft Fair in July, and in November in the church itself due to the weather. On both occasions the activities attracted a steady flow of children and adults.

All-age services were provided on Good Friday morning, Easter Day, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

In 2024 Youth Club followed its usual pattern meeting fortnightly in the Village Hall. In addition to the usual club nights (with activities ranging from games in the upper hall, to craftwork and quizzes downstairs), the summer BBQ was held in the Castle grounds.

Music

There was no Music Coordinator in post during the year, but in practice Anna Brooker held that role and, with Anna's departure, Hester Higton took on the role of choosing hymns. The lion's share of accompaniment fell upon the shoulders of the organist, Richard Hird, with support from the deputy organist, James Morgan; James also accompanied Hester when both led the music during the Eucharist. Worship was also enhanced with music from the Brancepeth Community Choir and the St Brandon's Consort.

DUSCR (Durham University Society of Change Ringers) continued to provide regular ringing for services during term time. In total, 30 quarter peals and 3 peals were rung, including those by the regular Tuesday evening band. Bell maintenance was carried out, including replacement of two ropes. James Morgan continued to act as Tower Captain.

Deanery and Ecumenical relationships

Deanery Synod representatives attended meetings whenever possible, as did the licensed clergy, bringing reports to the PCC, providing an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the Church.

St Brandon's is part of DH7 Churches Together, and some members attend their meetings.

St Brandon's continued to contribute regularly via the yellow bin in church to the Food Bank run by Durham Christian Partnership. On Mothering Sunday, gifts were brought for the Durham Women's Refuge. Christmas gifts were again collected for distribution by the Salvation Army in Langley Moor. We are grateful to those who organise these collections on our behalf.

Building and churchyard

The Fabric & Finance Committee has continued to meet quarterly. Follow-up on the 2023 Quinquennial Report involved some routine maintenance and early planning for a project to remove the old boiler house. The committee also coordinated grass cutting and churchyard tidy-up events, along with regular maintenance and various minor repairs undertaken in the year.

Events

2024 was a busy year for events, with the church being hired on 13 occasions, raising a total of £3,474. Some hirers were old friends making a welcome return, whilst others were new to St Brandon's. Bookings were managed with grace and efficiency by Janette Foxe, aided by a team of volunteers to move chairs and welcome visitors. Events included diocesan and national training events, quiet days, a range of concerts and visits offered to Castle tour groups, with several new hirers this year.

Finances

Following the stewardship campaign at the end of 2023, the church's financial position was somewhat improved. The new Payaz contactless payment unit, installed at the end of 2023, also continued to work well, with only occasional outages, bringing in a new stream of donations. The overall position nevertheless remained challenging, and in the autumn the Fabric & Finance Committee once again recommended to PCC that, to remain within the church's reserves policy, the full amount of Parish Share requested by the diocese could not be pledged for 2025.

Vickie Jackson took over from Mike Higton as treasurer in the autumn.

The approved annual accounts follow.

Dated: 11 May 2025

Approved by St Brandon's Parochial Church Council and signed on its behalf by:



Mike Higton (Lay Chair)



Vickie Jackson (Treasurer)

Independent examiner's report to the PCC of St Brandon's Church, Brancepeth

I report to members of the PCC on my examination of the accounts of the PCC of St Brandon's, Brancepeth for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As members of the PCC you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the PCC's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material 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 Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or

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 accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Name:

JAMES DALTON

Address:

1 Rectory Cottage
BRANCEPETH
DH7 8DD

Date:

14 / April / 25



Brancepeth Parochial Church Council

Balance Sheet

As at: 31 December 2024

	As at 31/12/2023 £	As at 31/12/2024 £
Current assets		
Cash at bank and in hand	35,759	40,712
Represented by		
Unrestricted		
Unrestricted - General Fund	28,952	33,670
Restricted		
Restricted - Appeal + HLF Project	3,785	3,785
Restricted - Charitable collections	301	104
Restricted - Tower fund	2,718	3155
Funds of the Church	35,759	40,712

Please note that figures are rounded down to the nearest pound, and so may not sum to the exact totals given.

Brancepeth Parochial Church Council
Receipts and Payments Account
For the period from 01 January 2024 to 31 December 2024

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted (HLF + Appeal)	Restricted (Charitable donations)	Restricted (Tower fund)	Total funds	Prior year total funds
<i>Receipts</i>						
Regular giving	33,756		35		33,791	32,057
Loose plate collections	3,445		212		3,657	3,548
All other giving	3,283			838	4,121	5,572
Gift Aid recovered	10,434				10,434	8,414
Grants	5,074				5,074	21,861
Fundraising activities	390				390	
Interest	975				975	351
Weddings and funerals	2,914				2,914	3,860
Trading activities						
Cards and booklets	489				489	367
Church hire	3,377				3,377	2,659
Newsletter	178				178	131
Membership fees	31				31	83
Other						28
Total receipts	64,346		247	838	65,431	78,932
<i>Payments</i>						
Cost of fundraising activities	201				201	633
Charitable giving	4,132		443		4,575	5,110
Diocesan parish share	31,500				31,500	36,200
Salaries, wages and honoraria	1,515				1,515	1,358
Clergy and staff expenses	861				861	834
Mission and evangelism costs						
General	678				678	598
Children and Youth	149				149	493
Messy Church	165				165	183
Church running costs						
Insurance	4,744				4,744	4,385
Audit	30				30	
Phone & broadband	863				863	675
Organ tuning	1,167				1,167	533
Church maintenance	298			400	698	1,382
Cleaning	689				689	650
Security	2,649				2,649	2,995
Worship	1,315				1,315	2,340
Catering	61				61	48
Upkeep of churchyard	579				579	947
Safeguarding	38				38	19

Church utility bills						
Electricity	1,494				1,494	1,632
Gas	4,170				4,170	4,096
Newsletter	1,786				1,786	1,309
Stonework project						6,135
Quinquennial inspection						1320
Other	549				549	63
Total expenditure	59,633	443	400		60,476	73,937
Excess of receipts over payments	4,713	-196	438		4, 955	4,994
<i>Reconciliation of funds</i>						
All assets at 01 Jan 2024	28,952	3,785	301	2,718	35,759	
All assets at 31 Dec 2024	33,670	3,785	104	3,155	40,712	
Change	4,713	0	-196	437	4,955	

Please note that figures are rounded down to the nearest pound, and so may not sum to the exact totals given.