

# THE PARISH OF BLACKWELL, ALL SAINTS' AND SALUTATION



THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE  
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL,  
CHURCH GROUPS,  
& RELATED ORGANISATIONS  
FOR THE CHURCH YEAR  
April 2023 – April 2024

# The Parish of All Saints and Salutation Blackwell

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This is the twenty sixth annual report of the Parish of Blackwell, a parish that became a legal entity on All Saints' Day, 1998. This report covers the period from the last Annual General Meeting held in April 2023 to April 2024. The Annual Report is a collection of individual reports from the different people, committees and groups involved with this Parish Church, and they show, as in previous years, the full expression of the ministry we are all involved in within the congregations and wider parish, and in service to the community. It is hoped that the report will be read parishioners and friends as well, and that you will pray for those who are involved in all the different activities, groups and organisations.

The full report will again be published on the parish website to reduce the number of copies that need to be printed. We are grateful to those people who have taken time and care to write reports and to those who have had a hand in producing this Annual Report.

### **PCC Chair's Report**

In Jen's absence it falls to me as Vice-chair of the PCC to write this section of the annual report and to reflect on the past year for our Parish.

Our community and church, aims to provide full and accessible church services for both those who live in the parish and visitors and our recovery continues post-pandemic.

We are grateful that we have such an able ministry team that support Jen (Brian, Debby, Keith, Kevin, Andy, Debs and Tim) in our Benefice, who enable Holy Communion, Services of the Word and the Occasional Offices, leading the Church in worship, preaching and in pray. This has been all the more evident when we have been without Jen during her health-related absences. I especially want to focus on the contribution by Brian Holmes, and particularly during Jen's most recent prolonged absence. Brian's wise leadership and support has been invaluable, and I and the PCC cannot thank him enough. I would also wish to express my thanks to Mark East, the Area Dean who has been a great support in securing clergy to maintain access to communion for as many of our services as possible, especially during Holy Week and Easter and to Debby Gill for her devoted work on the ministry team rotas. We don't know what the future holds in terms of Jen's health, although we wish her a speedy recovery, but we hope that you will be understanding when on occasions (hopefully few) we are unable to find a priest to offer communion.

The life of our church is supported by many other individuals and groups without whom our services and other worship could not happen. These include the verger team, servers, lesson readers, eucharist assistants, our music director and organists, the choir and musicians, the church office, the flower arrangers and church cleaners.

With the encouragement of the PCC and in line with the direction of the Church of England we have re-introduced the common cup at communion over the past year and this has been broadly welcomed by the congregation. We maintain the option of communion by intinction for those who

remain uncomfortable with sharing a chalice or who consider themselves vulnerable, thus making services accessible to as many as possible.

Over the past year a small group led by the Vicar have started a process of developing new service books. Thank you to Debby Gill, Peter Davison and Keith Whiston for all their hard work on this project, and to Lauren Davison for the tedious work of typing the services formats and to the anonymous donors that enabled the printing of the booklets.

Our Statistics for Mission return demonstrates that the numbers attending services remains lower than before the pandemic and sadly we said goodbye to some faithful members of our congregation during the year.

### **The Parish Vision**

“To Grow God’s Kingdom through All Saints’ and Salutation, Blackwell”.

We believe God is calling us to do this by:

- Growing the Church
- Growing as Disciples
- Growing in Service to the parish and beyond.

The Parish Vision was first developed in 2009, revisited in 2011 and refreshed when the Parish Profile was written in 2014. In May 2016, there was a Parish meeting to look at the Parish Vision and the situation in the church at that time and how this informed our plan for mission in the future.

A further Parish Vision Day was held in September 2023 to review the Parish Vision and revisit our priorities. The meeting was attended by approximately 30 members of the congregation and the ministry team and was ably facilitated by the Rev Alan Bartlett.

Our Parish profile demonstrates that we have a larger than average elderly population. and the growing number of socially isolated people, not just the elderly, but also adults living on their own. The meeting considered this ageing profile of our Parish and how we might support this going forward acknowledging that we needed to explore the profile and needs of our Parish further than time permitted on the day. There was agreement that the vision statement and the three priorities are still broadly applicable, but the meeting highlighted that further work is needed to develop specific and achievable priorities within each priority area. Sadly, the discussions also highlighted some of the tensions that exist within the congregation.

A working group led by the Vicar was convened to take the priorities identified by the Vision Day forward. An initial suggestion that came from the Vision Day was to promote the activities of the Church and hall user groups as part of the annual Parish Christmas card. A Card and flyer were developed and delivered to every household in the Parish. A stall at the Christmas Fare also sought to promote the activities of the Church and the hall user groups. The Ministry Team has considered ways to promote discipleship which will be taken forward in 2024. The element of this was the focus on discipleship as part of the Lent study course. Updates on progress on the Vision Day priorities have also become a standing item on the PCC agenda.

Despite the recovery challenges post-pandemic experienced across all churches, we believe that we continue to engage with the Mission Action Plan (MAP) priorities of the Church which include:

- Discipleship and spiritual growth
- Community connection/outreach
- Ministry to young people
- Pastoral care
- Communication

### **Discipleship and spiritual growth**

A weekly group continues to meet together via Zoom to study the Bible. The Vision Day in September 2023 highlighted a need to further develop discipleship opportunities. A working group together with the Ministry team were tasked with developing opportunities to be introduced in early 2024. The first step in this journey was the Lent course which focussed on the book 'Holy Habits' by Andrew Roberts.

A healing ministry introduced in 2022 continues to be offered as part of the 10.30 holy communion service on the first Sunday of the month. Thank you to Debby Gill, Sue Elliot-Lyall, Clare Curran and Katie Malcolm who have supported Jen with this ministry.

There is a prayer group that meets monthly and provides an ongoing prayer forum for private requests in the parish and for those for whom we regularly pray. There is also a mid-week prayer to support the ministry of the church.

Café Church which was introduced following the three-year Partnership for Missional Church (PMC) programme has continued bi-monthly on a Sunday afternoon and has a small but loyal congregation. Thank you to the music group who contribute significantly to these services.

### **Community Connection/Outreach**

We have continued to develop a greater presence in our community through our website and other social media platforms, but we should not be complacent. Discussions at our September Vision Day raised questions about our visibility in the Parish and wider community. First steps included the flyer about activities happening in our buildings (church and halls) delivered with the Parish Christmas card and the stall promoting church activities at the Christmas Fayre, but much remains to be done.

Sadly, the Community Connections/Outreach group was unable to reconvene following the 2023 APCM as the new PCC established its committees and its roles have been picked up by individuals and other groups within the church community. It is hoped that this group can be re-established in the future.

As part of seeking to engage and work with the community we welcomed several organisations to share their work and how we as individuals and as a Church could support work in the 'sermon slot' at the 10.30 service. This included Men's Health, Darlington CAP (Christians Against Poverty) and Safe Families UK and Family Help.

The Millennium Centre (managed through a separate limited company) and Salutation Hall continue to be an important way in which this Christian community serves the needs of the wider community in which it is set. Both the centre and the hall are well used and provide invaluable service to the community. We are grateful to the team of buildings and grounds volunteers care for the Church, our Halls and the grounds, and progress of work is reported routinely to the PCC.



We are thankful for the work of the members of the Green Action Group who continue to promote our care of God's Creation leading the work towards achieving Eco-Congregation status for the Church. We currently hold the silver award, and the plaque is on the wall in the church foyer. Members of the group have shared their experiences and best practice with Deanery Synod members and other congregations.

Social activities continue to offer essential opportunities for fellowship amongst the congregation and within the wider Parish and community. These include the Parish lunch enjoyed by more than 40 participants every month. These together with the coffee mornings are an important means of limiting social isolation. We also enjoyed quizzes, a Burns Supper, and the return of the annual Harvest ceilidh for the first-time post pandemic. Hosting a local touring theatre group and our Summer Garden Party and Christmas Fayre all also offer opportunities to engage with the Parish and wider communities. Thank you to everyone involved in these activities both in the delivery and by attending.

### **Ministry to young people**

The Parent and Toddler Group continues to go from strength to strength. Thank you to Andy Young and his team of volunteers for restarting this group post pandemic.

Our uniformed organisations and their families continue to be invited to Parade services throughout the year, including Mothering Sunday and Remembrance Day. Sadly the 11<sup>th</sup> Darlington Brownies led by Julie Ross took the decision to re-locate to Elm Ridge as the growing numbers in the unit could no longer be accommodated in the Millennium Centre. We wish them well for the future. Their parting gift was to decorate our Christmas tree including lots of lovely handmade decorations that they had produced over several meetings. The Salutation Brownies led by Brown Owl Jenny Groves ably stepped in to support our Mothering Sunday service, producing the bouquets of flowers and contributing to the service. Thank you to both Brownie units. Later in this report you can read reports from all of the Guiding units associated to our church and all the activities they get up to.

The All Saints' Blackwell Pre-school continues to thrive under the leadership of Amanda Summers and her team. The most recent Ofsted inspection (2022) reported that the Pre-school is outstanding in all areas and highlights:

“Children thrive at this lovely pre-school. They demonstrate high levels of independence and confidence and show that they thoroughly enjoy their time at the pre-school. Staff know children extremely well and plan exciting activities that ignite their curiosity. For instance, children show fascination as they watch caterpillars, using their magnifying glasses. Children's behaviour is impeccable. Adults set clear expectations for children's behaviour. They model respectful relationships excellently. Adults are very responsive to children's emotional needs and children make strong bonds with adults. Children thoroughly enjoy playing together. Close friendships are evident throughout the pre-school. Children take turns, discuss their ideas and work collaboratively. For example, children work together to hold a pirate flag up in the wind and say, 'Let's hold it up. Three, two, one!' “

“Children benefit from adults who have a deep understanding of each child's needs. Children who need additional support receive this quickly and effectively. For example, plans are put in place so

that all staff know how to help children to make progress and referrals are made to other services for support, such as speech and language therapy.”

“Parents and carers speak very highly of the Pre-school and all the staff.”

### **Pastoral care**

With an ageing congregation and a parish profile that indicates a high proportion of older people, this is an area of ministry that continues to grow. The pastoral care group, consisting of the clergy and pastoral care team, undertake regular pastoral visits in the home, care homes and hospitals together with bereavement visits.

Service summaries developed during the pandemic for those who don't own computers or have a way to connect to online services, continue to be produced and distributed to those who are unable to access church services each Monday. These include the readings from the previous Sunday's services, together with the sermon and are delivered in person by a team of volunteers. Thank you to Katie Malcolm for all her work in co-ordinating this element of our ministry, also thank you to Michael Shepherd for covering this role during Katie's absence and to Andy Young for volunteering to take this forward in the future. Also, a big thankyou to the team who deliver these service summaries every week.

We continue to offer the 'Bereavement Journey', a 7-week course as part of a rolling programme in support of people who have experienced bereavement both recently and in the past. Publicity about the course with local GP practices and funeral directors continues to bring new people to the course. Thank you to Nick Auty, Andy Young and Mike Fryer for the support they offer to the delivery of this course with Jen.

### **Communication**

This is an area that as a Church we continue to strive to improve and was an area highlighted for further work by the Parish Vision Day. A range of communication methods are in use including the website, Facebook and MailChimp as well as paper communication (leaflet drops before the summer and Christmas fayres and the Parish Christmas card delivered to all households in the Parish).

Thank you to Andy Hopkins for all he does supporting 'all things IT' in our Church and in particular to both he and Colin Price for leading the commissioning of the new sound system which has greatly increased the enjoyment and accessibility of our services. Thank you also to Ian Groves for doing much more than his fair share of the Zoom broadcasting rota. Additional individuals have been trained to support further development and updating of the Church website.

Particular thanks go to all those members of the congregation who faithfully deliver bundles of leaflets, Christmas cards and parish magazines. Hopefully you will have noticed the new Church notice boards - no pun intended! Thank you to Colin for his leadership in procuring the replacement board which will hopefully increase the visibility of activities and services within church buildings.

The Parish Magazine has been revitalised over the past couple of years by a team of three editors who actively seek articles from a wider range of contributors. This publication (10 editions per year) is a vital source of information and interesting content for the readership and feedback has



been very positive. Thank you to Kevin Winkworth, David Smith and Ellis Leatherbarrow who continue to drive forward this valuable element of our Church's outreach within and beyond the Parish.

Finally, I need to thank the members of the PCC for their support and advice throughout the year. Thank you firstly to Julie Denham who steps down from the PCC at this APCM after completing two successive 3-year terms. Several PCC members have come to the end of their first 3-year term, and I hope that they will consider standing for re-election. Sadly, we have received a number of resignations. Several weeks ago, Peter Davison resigned as PCC treasurer after 17 years of dedicated service. Clare Curran has also resigned from her role as Planned Giving Treasurer. Both have kindly agreed to continue in these roles until the APCM. Pam Davison and Alison Barker have also resigned from their roles with the Millenium Trust, Treasurer and Company Secretary respectively. Dee Wastnedge has also indicated a wish to step back from her role as bookings secretary. My sincere thanks go to all these individuals for the contribution that they have made to the smooth and efficient running of our Church and Hall.

In summary, this has been a challenging year for our church community, and we need more than ever to remain strong in our faith, working together to continue do God's work in our community.

**Sandra Whiston, Churchwarden and Vice-chair of PCC**

## **The Church Wardens Report**

As David Smith and I approach the end of our second year as Churchwardens, I reflect on another year that has continued to challenge us in many ways, both good and not so good. At the beginning of this year, and indeed for the previous year there had been only three of us (David and I as churchwarden and Mike Fryer as Prowarden). At the first PCC meeting of the year Jonathan Barker kindly volunteered to return to the 'team' as a Prowarden.

Despite more than thirty years attending All Saints' and dabbling over the years in various aspects of the life of our church, I now realise how little knowledge I had of how the life of the church and the wider Church of England and the role of the Churchwarden within it and the 'rules' that we must operate within! I am acutely aware of how much work is carried out quietly and efficiently behind the scenes by many people. We are fortunate at All Saints to have many parishioners who give freely of their time to ensure the smooth running of the Parish. During Jen's illnesses this year, this sense of everybody rallying round, their willingness to work together with a strong sense of fellowship and faith is evident. To them all I would like to say a big thank you.

It continues to be a privilege to serve as churchwarden, and I am so grateful for the help and support of Jen, Brian, my fellow warden, David Smith, and our Pro-wardens Mike Fryer and Jonathan Barker and to the members of the PCC.

**Sandra Whiston, Churchwarden.**

## **PCC Secretary's Report**

I became the PCC Secretary at the first PCC meeting in May 2023 following the 2022/23 APCM.

There have been six PCC meetings during 2023/24: the first three (May, July and September) were attended by the Vicar who chaired the first part of the meeting and after giving the Education and Worship reports then handed the chair to one of the wardens.

The Vicar booked a holiday to coincide with the November meeting, she advised she had tested positive for COVID for the January meeting and following her return to work was signed off for the March meeting. Each of these meetings were chaired by a warden.

Many thanks to all the members of the PCC for your assistance and support during the year.

**Eleanor Winkworth, PCC Secretary**

## **Electoral Roll Report**

In accordance with Church Representation Rules 2020, a partial revision of the roll has been carried out. Those who were on the roll and have deceased during the past year have been removed and there have been three new additions. Those who have left the locality and no longer attend church have also been removed.

The new representation rules specify that the published roll must only display the names of those enrolled. Over 50% of the people on the Roll reside within the Parish boundary and about 90% live inside the DL3 postal district. A copy of the Roll is available for inspection in the Parish Office.

A full revision of the Roll will be undertaken in 2025.

Year		Number on Roll
2019	Full revision	189
2022	Partial revision	193
2023	Partial revision	191
2024	Partial revision	172

**David V Smith, Electoral Roll Officer**

## **Parish Office**

The Parish Office is staffed Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday mornings from 9.30am until 12noon and is the focus of parish administration.

The office not only serves this parish of course, but also the Parish of Coniscliffe.

**Nicky Waller, Parish Secretary**

## 2. WORSHIP AND FAITH DEVELOPMENT REPORT

### Parish Readers

It has been another busy year for the Readers, bringing with it both opportunities and challenges, as usual. We continue to play our part in the facilitating of worship across the Benefice, and each of us is involved in various additional roles. Some of the things we do include preaching, leading Services of the Word, Lent and Bible study groups, pastoral work, funeral ministry including involvement in the Bereavement Journey, running the re-opened Parent and Toddler Group over the past year, being part of the church magazine's editorial team, running the Men's Group, helping with the development of Café Church, directing music for a variety of worship services, organising the up-coming Music Festival, and administrative duties. For the things that I have missed out, please accept my apologies. All of this is just a snapshot of what is done by the Reader team, and there are always more gifts to be discovered and used in God's service. If you feel drawn to explore the role of a Reader, please don't ignore it. It is such a privilege to do what we do, and we are grateful and give thanks for the prayers and support of the Vicar, Brian Holmes, and the congregation, but especially we are grateful for the grace of God who calls us into His service.

Your Parish Readers:

**Debby Gill, Susan Leatherbarrow, Keith Whiston, Kevin Winkworth and Andy Young.**

### Verger's Report

The team of vergers at All Saints' Church work tirelessly and without any complaint making all the services run smoothly, effectively and above all efficiently. Therefore, my sincere thanks go to the following – Phil Elliott-Lyall, Alan Waller and Eileen Auty.

Should you wish to assist the church in this crucial and rewarding role, then please see the Vicar or myself.

**Mike Fryer, Head Verger**

### Safeguarding Report

Once again there are no significant safeguarding incidents to report. Our commitment to safeguarding is evidenced by its profile on the church website, posters around church and our dedicated safeguarding email address [safeguarding@allsaintsblackwell.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@allsaintsblackwell.org.uk).

The increased profile of safeguarding in the media means that occasionally we deal with safeguarding reports or allegations which on investigation are found to be disputes or misunderstandings between individuals. It is however important that these concerns are dealt with promptly and in confidence and we work closely with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer who is incredibly supportive. This also highlights the importance of safeguarding training for individuals who give so freely of their time to carry out the various roles within our Church.

We continue to implement guidance cascaded from the Church of England via the Diocesan Safeguarding team. The significant development this year has been the introduction by the Diocese of the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard and Hub. As a Parish we have been given access to these two related online tools that support our recording of parish safeguarding activities and training to ensure that we are compliant with the national safeguarding standards. Sandra has attended online training on the use of the dashboard and hub led by the software developer.

The Diocesan safeguarding team also organise quarterly PSO 'get togethers' at which guidance, reports and updates from the national Church of England safeguarding team are shared. Sandra attends these meetings. Recent discussions included the Alexis Jay Report ([Report into the future of safeguarding in the Church of England \(futureofchurchsafeguarding.org.uk\)](https://www.futureofchurchsafeguarding.org.uk)), the Review of the Independent Safeguarding Review report prepared by the barrister Sarah Wilkinson ([isb-review-report-30-november-2023.pdf \(churchofengland.org\)](https://www.churchofengland.org)) and updates on the National Safeguarding Standards.

**Sandra Whiston and Mike Fryer, Parish Safeguarding Officers**

## **Readers and Sidespeople**

There are almost 28 parishioners regularly involved, some just readers or sidespeople, some are on both rotas. We are very grateful for everyone's involvement.

We are always pleased when someone new wants to become involved in this important part of our worship. Please, let me know if you would like to be included in the next six-monthly rota.

**Nicky Waller, Parish Secretary**

## **Music Director Report**

This year has seen some excellent services that I cannot possibly put on without the continued support and help of a large group of people, many of whom are not regular congregation members, but who nevertheless support the work of our church with vigour and enthusiasm.

*The congregational singing in this church is really rather good.* I hope that the work on the organ has helped that. I know I don't always show it, but I genuinely welcome and appreciate your comments on any aspect of the music – choices, tunes, volume, speed, whatever. The organist is here to serve, and I do honestly try my best to enhance the worship to the glory of God in our beautiful church.

I am pleased to say we do still have singers who come on a Sunday morning, and I would love to build that up, but it really does need to be from our congregation. *A huge thank you, in particular, to Ellis and Michael for their hard work and great voices.* It does make a real difference.

We have managed to make evensong a fairly regular event, and something which draws singers and congregation from other parishes to worship with us. My next step is to increase the variety of music performed, and to advertise it more widely. There are very few churches still performing evensong regularly – it is a lovely service, and one well worth attending.

We have also been able to draw on the band and choir to enhance our worship at a number of services. I'd like to record my thanks to them for the hours of work they put in learning the music, especially in the run up to Christmas (usually 4 months' work). Outside of this, the band and choir perform at other events, always as ambassadors for our church and for the work we do in the community here. The poor souls also have to put up with my preaching about the religious music – I see it as part of my ministry to take our church out into the community. They also raise money for the church by putting on events and donating from their funds.

Coming up, the choir and band will be performing as part of our brand new music festival. This is hopefully going to develop into a good source of income for the church, as well as an opportunity to show the wider community what an amazing church we have here. If you have any ideas about the running of such events, please let me know – it is my first time and I need all the help I can get. Thank you for your continued support. I love serving the church here and look forward to many years of developing the music into something unique and special to Blackwell.

P.S. anyone own a ukulele?

**Andrew Young, Director of Music**

## **Music Group**

The Music Group has very much enjoyed leading worship for Cafe Church this year, although our role has been reduced. We continue to aim to support each other as well as do our best to provide more. The worship lead usually coordinates worship teams, works with other ministers to plan worship services, and provides vital leadership and support for those involved in the ministry of music during weekly services. They may also direct a worship team, a choir, and instrumentalists during church services and programs. music for our church. Since 2009 when the group was formed, we have always tried to provide a choice of music to cater for a wide range of tastes, a younger age group and people who would not otherwise be attracted to church. With this in mind, we are open to suggestions as to how we can be more visible at church. Further support is always welcomed and in particular we need a pianist and singers who would like to work as part of a team. Our practices are arranged according to the availability of the group members.

**Dorothy Puchala, Music Group Coordinator**

## **Flower Arrangers**

It remains a privilege to arrange flowers in church. I know they are appreciated by our parishioners. Thank you everyone for your kind comments. We continue to use fresh flowers primarily for festivals or if they are requested for memorials, wedding anniversaries, birthdays etc. Fresh flowers have increased in price, and we save money by using artificial flowers, this also means that we don't have to change the arrangements so often. There are only three of us on the flower arranging team! We need some more helpers especially for the festivals. So, if you can spare some time at Harvest come along and we will show you how to arrange flowers for the window ledges.

**Lona Martin**

## 3. Stewardship: Finances & Grounds Reports

### PCC Treasurers Report

The church continues to struggle financially. The increase in the cost of living plus the decline in the numbers attending since the pandemic has impacted upon our income, both in terms of Planned Giving and collections. We have also had fewer funerals and weddings in the year which also reduced our income.

Details of the results for 2023 are shown in the extracts from the Annual Report and Financial Statements included under 'Abridged Accounts' later in this document and indicate an overall deficit of £13,693.

Total receipts on unrestricted funds were significantly lower at £106,065 (2022: £122,932). However, total expenditure on unrestricted funds also reduced to £115,539 (2022: £129,164). These reductions resulted in our deficit on unrestricted funds increasing to £9,474. (2022: £6,232).

Income from Planned Giving continued its recent trend, reducing to £54,159 (2022: £57,584), which is very disappointing and if unabated will potentially make the results worse in future.

To try and improve our finances we reduced our parish share in 2023 from £70,000 in 2022 to £60,000. This helped us reduce our amount spent to provide the Christian Ministry by over £15,000 to £105,791.

For the first time since the pandemic, we were able to hold our summer Garden Party. This was a welcome return which, together with our annual Christmas Fair, raised a total of £5,858 for church funds.

We are also fortunate in having many groups within our church which, as well as providing social activities, also raise funds for the church. These include the Flower Fund (£51); Social Committee (£1,291); 100 Club (£370); Ladies Fellowship (£116, before donations); Circle Dancing (£88, before donations); Tea and Coffee (£603); Parish Lunch Club (£1,064 before donations) and the Bell Ringers who raised £261 enabling them to donate £270 to the King's Church Foodbank. It was particularly pleasing to see the return of the Parent & Toddler Group which meets on a Friday morning. This recommenced in April and has gone from strength to strength throughout the year. Unfortunately, the production and distribution of the church magazine resulted in a deficit of £519. We have tried to address this problem in 2024 by increasing the price of the magazine.

The Restricted Funds deficit amounted to £4,219 (2022: surplus £1,015).

Our Pre-School continues to provide a wonderful service, building on its award from Ofsted in 2022 of "outstanding". Unfortunately, due to an overall reduction in child numbers generally and increased competition from other pre-schools, numbers of children attending reduced. Despite doing all we could to control costs and wages it suffered a deficit in the year of £4,554 (2022: surplus £1,015). Since its inception in 2005 this only the 4<sup>th</sup> year it has not made a surplus and its



accumulated profits over the years amount to over £46,000. However, numbers seem to be increasing in 2024 and although the large increase in minimum wage will make things harder the government is increasing grants for children who attend, which should offset the increases in wages.

The overall net deficit of the church in 2023 is, therefore, £13,693, another disappointing result being higher than the overall deficit of £5,217 in 2022.

This deficit has resulted in our total net assets at the end of the year decreasing to £127,020 (2022: £140,713) of which £72,804 is unrestricted funds and £54,216 is restricted.

To try and improve our finances the PCC decided that for 2024 we would, once again, have to reduce our parish share pledge to the Diocese, this time from £60,000 to £50,000.

Despite this reduction the PCC still strongly believes in the doctrine that the parish share largely provides the stipends and housing for the clergy within the whole of the diocese and, therefore, helps parishes that are not as fortunate as we are financially.

However, this continues our recent trend of having to reduce our parish share contribution from a peak of £97,000 to £50,000 for 2024.

We will continue to monitor costs and expenditure diligently and try to increase income in an effort to return to a position of making a surplus.

Regrettably, in light of recent events I have had to review my position as treasurer and consequently I will be resigning at the APCM after 14 years' service. It has been a privilege being your treasurer and I thank you for your support and encouragement over the years, particularly to Pam who has been my most loyal and dedicated supporter throughout. I wish my replacement every success in the future.

**Peter Davison, Treasurer**

**Abridged Accounts – please see the Appendices on pages: 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36**

## **Planned Giving**

As I write this report, I need to share that I am stepping down as Planned Giving Treasurer at the APCM this year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Parishioners for their support during my time in this role, and specifically for their generous donations. I am not sure who is taking over the reins, but I wish them well as they take on this role.

This year has once again been a challenging year for many in the parish, having seen their income stretched with continued increases in the cost of living. Inevitably we have seen a decline in giving, both on a regular basis and in the plate. We have also seen a reduction in users of our church for

funerals, baptisms, and weddings, and as such collections have reduced. The impact of these as you would expect have taken their toll upon our Parish finances. This year with the increased costs of running the Church, and the dip in giving, you will see from the Treasurers report we have incurred a deficit of £13,693 in 2023.

Once again, this year, we have had a specific planned giving sermon week, where the Vicar shared with Parishioners the impact of the continued rising costs of running our Parish Church and the need for increased giving. We have taken time to thank parishioners for their giving at our services and in the Parish Magazine. We were also delighted to see an increase in fundraising events. As a Parish it is important, we continue to grow our offering and engage with the local Community.

To enable our Church to flourish and maintain its offering, we need to consider how we can start to reduce this deficit. One area is Parish Giving, and I appreciate this year hasn't been the best to be asking for more from you. Having reviewed the Standing Orders and the Parish Giving Scheme, we have been blessed with some new givers, and sadly we have lost a number of givers this year, and some regular givers have had to reduce their giving. The loose plate has also reduced this year. I know you will all be saddened by this situation, but we need to pray to God for his guidance to help us to try to improve this position for our church.

I would urge all to consider whether they could increase their giving or start to make a commitment to regular giving to the Church. I would ask all regular givers, as well as people who would like to start to make a regular contribution to maintain the life and work of our Church to consider and sign up to the direct debit Parish Giving Scheme. Details of this scheme can be found in the foyer on the leaflet stand. This makes the administration much simpler, and feedback has been very positive about the ease with which you can contact the scheme administrators.

Thank you for all your support, your giving, and for your support to help further our efforts to grow Gods Kingdom in this Parish and beyond. With every blessing

**Clare Curran, Planned Giving Treasurer**

## **Buildings and Grounds Group**

For the last year the church and trust "estate" has been managed on an informal but reasonably successful basis. I am grateful to Phil [Elliott-Lyall], David [Curran], Steve [Wilton], Kevin [Winkworth], Eleanor [Winkworth], Andy [Hopkins], Brian [Holmes], Andy [Young], Michael [Shepherd] and David [Smith] who have all made a contribution to the smooth running of the "estate" by completing many individual tasks.

The tasks completed, or overseen, by the team over the last 12 months include:

1. The electric water heater in the gentlemen's toilets burst and caused significant damage requiring the toilets to be stripped out and rebuilt. More recently the electric water heater in the caretaker's store, which also serves the ladies' toilets started to leak and was taken out of service. All the hot water in the toilets is supplied by a single electric heater in the accessible toilet. This can only be considered a temporary solution.

2. The audio system, including the organ, in the church has been improved. New speakers have been installed in the nave and the chancel. The body worn radio microphones have been replaced and a hand-held radio microphone added. New amplification and “app” based control system has been provided. The organ amplification has been overhauled and rebalanced. The chancel speakers have been brought back into use.
3. A new external notice board for All Saints’ Church has been purchased and installed. The text has been updated and a new larger weatherproof display window has been provided.
4. The fire alarm system has intermittently been in fault. Woolleys, our engineers have made several attempts to trace the fault. It is hoped that, at their most recent visit, a successful repair was achieved.
5. Two new gates have been fitted as access to the soft play area outside the Enid Smith Rooms. An attempt has been made to clean the surface with limited success.
6. At Salutation Hall a new electric water heater has been installed in the kitchen and improved heating controls provided. A working group is developing a long-term plan for the building which is now “showing its age”.
7. Planning permission was granted on 13 November 2023 for a small container to be sited on the All Saints’ Church field to house a ride-on mower for the maintenance of the grass.

Numerous other minor tasks were carried out by the team throughout the year.

The grounds at All Saints’ Church and Millennium Centre plus Salutation Hall were maintained by Brian Park under a contract agreed with him during the course of the year.

### **Colin Price**

### **Salutation Hall**

Following the pandemic usage of the hall is now increasing with many regular users returning. In addition, the hall was also used again for several parties throughout the year, all of which is very encouraging. Consequently, rental income in the year once again improved to £4,189 (2022: £2,926). Expenditure also increased to £3,118 (2022: £1,998).

During 2022 we were helped by the receipt of a total of £1,000 from 2 local councillors who gave £500 each from their grant funding to go towards the facilities at Salutation Hall. The expenditure in 2023 included the use of part of this money, (£770), which went towards a new electric water heater and improved heating controls. The remainder will be used in 2024 to redecorate the kitchen.

As a result, in 2023 Salutation Hall produced a surplus of £1,071 as compared to a surplus of £1,928 in 2022.

A working group is developing ideas for the building as it is now showing signs of its age.

### **Pam Davison, Salutation Hall Committee**

## **Health and Safety Officer Report**

Follow up risk assessments have been carried out on the main body of the church, vestry kitchen area, vestry (choir vestry was not assessed), janitor's storage cupboard and the kitchen. Fire extinguisher and Portable Appliance testing are all in date. The only areas for concern are:

- Damaged cupboard doors in the vestry
- Portable amplifier in church with no PAT certificate
- Microwave oven in the kitchen with no PAT certificate
- Flat tyres on the vestry wheelchair

Follow up assessments are required for Barbara Bishop Room, Enid Smith Rooms, Millennium Hall, toilets and Salutation Hall, choir vestry.

A record keeping process still needs to be put in place for physical reports together with electronic storage and back up.

No accidents or near miss incidents have been reported.

**David Smith, Health & Safety Officer**

## 4. CHURCH COMMUNITIES GROUPS & ACTIVITIES REPORTS

### Social Committee

As a church we held our first post-pandemic Garden Party in June. Although this was organised by a dedicated group, its delivery was still supported by members of the social committee. For once the weather was kind to us and it was a pleasure to see lots of young families enjoying the sunshine on the field. It was a successful event raising a significant amount towards church funds.

The Harvest Ceilidh finally made its welcome return post-pandemic. Ticket sales were again slow within the church, but we held our nerve and there was a late surge in sales after we shared the event with other churches in the town, something that we will repeat in future. Promoting this type of event to the wider community is something that we will also consider in the future. We raised £324 for church funds.

Christmas Fayre was well attended, and we received lots of positive feedback. It was good to see some new faces and great not to have to work behind screens in the Blackwell Tea Rooms! A healthy £3787 was raised for church funds. Thank you to Andy Hopkins for continuing to lead the organisation of this event.

In January as a committee we supported the Burn's Night in collaboration with St. Edwins for the first time. This event was led by Eleanor Winkworth and ladies from the St Edwin's congregation. It was well received with 72 people attending.

In February, we welcomed the Castle Players again. Their winter touring production this year was 'These Things Do Happen' a tale of North Yorkshire farming folk. The Castle Players enjoy coming to All Saints and we get a significant number of visitors to the event.

We held coffee mornings in May, September, March and April. This is an increase on our traditional March and September dates. The May coffee morning raised funds for Christian Aid Week, whilst the March one aims to raise awareness of Fairtrade Fortnight. As these are so well received, we decided to hold an extra one in April after we cancelled our planned quiz and games afternoon with afternoon tea due to a clash with the planned music festival.

We remain open to any members of the congregation who would like to join us, and I am happy to report that we welcomed two new members this year.

As a committee we exist to promote fellowship amongst the church community. Good fellowship amongst a congregation is an indicator of a healthy church. As always, we are open to any suggestions for events. We understand that all events are not to everyone's liking, but if events are not supported then they cannot go ahead, especially where there are up-front costs for the church, such as the ceilidh band, as events need to break even. We are not a fundraising committee, with the exception of our work on the Christmas Faye and Garden Party, but consider funds raised through other events as a happy collateral benefit. The most important factor is the promotion of fellowship.

**Sandra Whiston, Chair of Social Committee**

## **Green Action Group**

*“The purpose of the Green Action Group is to help the Church to appreciate our individual and joint share of responsibility for climate change, and to relate this to our Christian faith.*

*The Group will encourage the Church and the wider community to move to a simpler, more sustainable lifestyle that will protect all God’s creation and justice for all God’s people”.*

The group’s Zoom meetings have been replaced by face-to-face meetings and occur about every other month.

### **Magazine articles**

Various articles on environmental issues have been published in the Parish Magazine.

### **The Giving Tree**

The Giving Tree was used to attract donations to St. Theresa’s Hospice. Due to low support, it will probably not continue in 2024.

### **Eco-Church**

It was decided not to proceed with working towards the Gold award as a great deal of detailed effort would be required to achieve this. However, a presentation was given to the Deanery Synod explaining what had been achieved.

### **Land**

The orchard at the far end of the church land continues to be maintained and the harvest given to the congregation and the Food Bank. The wildflower meadow has not been a success so far, but efforts continue to be made to establish it in that area. The trees obtained from “The Woodland Trust” have all taken root. The two oaks have also taken root and commemorative plaques have been made for the late Queen Elizabeth’s 70<sup>th</sup> Jubilee and the Coronation of King Charles 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Community and Global Engagement**

Ways of making the church and Millennium Centre more energy efficient/green continue to be looked at. As mentioned under “Eco-church a presentation was given to Deanery Synod on the work of this group.

### **David Smith, Chair of Green Action Group**

## **All Saints’ and Salutation Ladies Fellowship**

Ladies Fellowship has remained a popular group which enjoys a variety of activities, most of which take place on the evening of the fourth Tuesday of the month. It currently has 40 members. New members and visitors are always welcome. Its finances remain healthy due to the support from its members and the hard work of its committee of 8.

Talks from a variety of speakers continue to be both informative and entertaining. Chris Lloyd, local historian and journalist, spoke about possible local inspirations for the characters in Lewis Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland. Author Philip Caine’s talk “A Barrow to Bagdad”, was an engrossing account of his career and experiences, which took him across the world from Barrow-in-Furnace to Bagdad,



in a variety of jobs including working in the oil industry and logistics. Dave Dean provided an interesting and vivid evening on Myths and Legends. Gordon Norrie spoke passionately about the work of the Dogs Trust. Lyn Lamport presented her detailed and historical personal research in her talk "Opera Audience".

The September meeting is now an established social get together with a quiz and games. The July Strawberry Evening has remained extremely popular. In December, the annual Carol Service was much enhanced by Andy Young and the choir singing two beautiful anthems. It was followed by a convivial get-together with mince pies, mulled wine, a wine and chocolate raffle and, as is often the case at the meetings, plenty of laughter. The annual outing (in conjunction with the local NCW) was a trip to Alnwick Gardens followed by a cream tea. The recent AGM celebrated the ongoing success of the group after which the President, the Rev. Jennifer Croft gave an enlightening talk on her experiences of Aviation Medicine and its impact on current times.

As well as the social benefits which this group provides, charities have received donations. The fellowship has continued to support USPG and at the AGM, members voted to also support local charity Safe Families for Children (SFFC). The amount for each charity had been doubled to £200 this year. Gordon Norrie received a £40 donation for the Dogs Trust. At Christmas, gifts for the local Women's Refuge were provided by individual members. A huge variety of items from pyjamas and cosmetics to toys and items for the children, was delivered to them. In addition, the Fellowship provided dozens of jars for the sweet stall at the summer fair.

Currently the Fellowship is still pursuing the making of a banner, for display in the church, to celebrate its many years as a group.

**Ann Bell, Secretary, All Saints and Salutation Ladies Fellowship**

## **Men's Group**

The Men's Group is a very informal organisation. There is no membership fee or attendance requirement. The group provides the opportunity to meet socially and visit places of interest. We formed in 1999 and so this year we shall celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This should give us the excuse to drink lots more beer!

**Kevin Winkworth, Secretary**

## **Parish Lunch**

The Parish lunch is usually held on the third Thursday of the month in the Garden rooms. Pre School kindly moved at Christmas, to allow us the use of the main hall, enabling us to cater for over fifty people.

As usual, the proceeds from the Lent lunch were donated to Christian Aid. This year the cheque came to an amazing £226, for which we were very grateful.

I would like to thank all who help to make the Parish lunch such an enjoyable time, whether it be selling tickets, catering, setting up and tidying away, washing the dishes and tablecloths, bringing

people to the lunch or simply attending. In order to know how much food to prepare, we sell tickets, priced at £7.50 each, in advance, at the main church services.

We would love to see you at the next lunch – come and join us for a two-course meal, with hot drink, and fellowship.

**Susan Price, Parish Lunch Club Co-ordinator**

## **Circle Dancing**

Venue: Salutation Hall

Monday afternoons during school term time

Time: 1:45 – 3:45 pm

Charge: £3

We are into our second year without Mary Henry. She is loved and missed but we continue. After Mary died we made a donation in her memory, to St Teresa's hospice, and will make another donation this year.

2023 saw some new members joining us. We have spoken about offering a 'taster' session to attract people and can look at that again this year. The dancing is easy and people say that they find it uplifting and supportive. In the centre of the circle, we take it in turns to provide flowers and candles as a focal point for those who like to meditate when they dance.

It is so enjoyable to be with others and share the music and the gentle movement. Anyone who would like to join us will be warmly welcomed and absolutely no previous experience is required.

**Mary Grimes**

## **The Hand Bell Ringing Group**

*"Let the bells ring out at Christmas".*

Once again, the All Saints' handbell ringers turned out at the beginning of December to raise money for Darlington Food Bank. Shoppers donated generously at Sainsbury's supermarket as carols and festive songs were rung. In addition to a trolley full of donated goods, just over £260 pounds was raised.

Unfortunately, due to the lack of voices, the annual carol singing was limited to entertaining the residents of Abbeyfields, so no further money was added.

A cheque was presented to Caroline Todd, manager of the Food Bank, and some of the group enjoyed a coffee at the associated café. Many thanks to all those who turned out to come along to ring, sing or supported this effort by their donations.

If we are to continue ringing for charity, the group needs more people to join in ringing. No previous experience required. Any practices will be advertised in the pew sheet. If you are interested, please come along, and have a go!

**Jane Elliott**

## **Badminton Group**

We meet almost every Friday from 8pm to 10pm in the Millennium Hall, during term time.

There are usually between four and six adult players who attend regularly and latterly we have been able to welcome a younger player who has been accompanied by his parents. We welcome all adults and younger people to join us as this helps to encourage developing players and adds variety to the game of 'old hands'.

There is one court on which we play doubles games, although more energetic participants are welcome to play singles games, whilst the rest of us catch our breath and catch up on the weekly news!

We each pay £2.00 per session, so if you are interested in joining us, please ring Sue Elliott-Lyall on 01325 241225.

**Sue Elliott-Lyall**

## **Knitting and Crafts Group**

This group was formed in September 2012 to bring together those people who have an interest in any form of craft – knitting, sewing, embroidery, crochet, tapestry, dressmaking – the list is as diverse as the talents!

The group usually meets most Thursdays from 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. in the Barbara Bishop room off the Church foyer. We continue to undertake individual projects and donate much of our work to local charities.

There is a wealth of knowledge to be shared by members of the group and to date we have ten members, which means it is quite snug if we all turn up on the same week.

For further details please ring Sue Elliott-Lyall on 01325 241225 for further details.

**Sue Elliott-Lyall**

## **Church Refreshments**

Thanks to a dedicated bunch of 11 volunteers, the Sunday morning refreshments after the 10.30 service continue to provide a pleasant half hour or so to meet up and chat. The co-ordination of this rota is produced by the church office. Many thanks to Sandra Whiston who keeps the tea/coffee replenished. If anyone can spare about an hour, they would be very welcome to join the rota.

**Nicky Waller, Parish Secretary**

## 5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CHARITIES REPORTS

### **The Parish Magazine**

The print media world has been in the doldrums in recent years and so it is pleasing to see the monthly parish magazine going from strength to strength. Our readers have told us how much they look forward to that satisfying plop as the latest edition drops through their letterbox and that they greedily devour its contents (that's enough of this. Ed).

The joint editors are grateful to all our contributors, and we would like to say a special thank you this year to Nick Auty for liaising with the printers. Thanks also to our team of magazine boys and girls who deliver. We were pleased to obtain two new subscribers following a recent mailshot. If anyone would like to join the mailing list, please speak to the parish office.

**Kevin Winkworth, David Smith and Ellis Leatherbarrow, Magazine Editors**

### **The Children's Society**

The annual box collection raised a total of £534.33 last year. Thank you once again to all our box holders for their generosity. Last year the charity supported more than 63,000 young people, helping them when they were facing huge life challenges like abuse, neglect and exploitation. The charity campaigns tirelessly for children to help them overcome the toughest challenges of modern life and improve their wellbeing and mental health. We have 26 box holders in our parish and would like to increase that number. If you would be interested in collecting for this charity in this way, please speak to one of us.

**Janice Shepherd, Alison Hopkins, Honorary Local Secretaries**

### **All Saints' Blackwell Pre-School**

Preschool offers places for children from the age of two years to school age. Opening times are 8:30am – 2:45pm, term time only (38 weeks a year).

Currently funding is available for many families accessing preschool:

- Working families can access 30 hrs of free childcare for 3/4-year-olds,
- Universal funding for 15 hrs free childcare for all 3/4-year-olds,
- 2-year-old Grant for 15 hrs free childcare for eligible parents (this is means tested).

Amanda Summers is the preschool manager and holds a foundation degree in Early Years and all members of preschool staff hold at least a Level 3 Child Care qualification. All staff are DBS checked and hold a Paediatric First Aid Certificate.

It has been a challenging year for Preschool with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. The cost of insurance and resources has spiralled, and we have been very grateful for the donations of resources our parents have made throughout the year.

The summer term saw lower numbers than usual due to the low birth rate with some schools therefore having spaces and offering places to some of our children who had turned three. This was disappointing as summer term usually sees our highest number of children.

Autumn term remained difficult with preschool saying goodbye to all our school leavers in July 2023. As our families are struggling with the cost of living, many are now deciding not to attend preschool until they are eligible for the nursery grant which comes into effect in January, April, September. Families who can afford to pay fees are typically choosing to attend for two or three sessions a week until they also are eligible for funding. However, the overall numbers of children were slightly more than last autumn with a greater number of two-year-olds joining preschool which bodes well for the future.

In September 2023, preschool made the decision to open for the 6hrs every day to accommodate new children as well as the children who attend for 30hrs a week. Although this meant higher rent would be paid and higher staff wages (due to the ratios for these two-year-olds 1:4 as opposed to 1:8 for 3+ yrs. old), preschool felt this was necessary to grow the preschool numbers which would be seen in January 2024. Indeed, preschool numbers rose in the Spring Term, due to the number of children now eligible for funding as well as those taking on extra days.

Looking to the future; numbers are continuing to rise due to children becoming eligible in April 2024 for the nursery grant as well as the new funding the government is introducing from April 2024 meaning working families with 2-year-olds will be eligible for 15hrs funding per week.

As always due to our location on the outskirts of Darlington, not being closer to school sites and schools such as Holly Family opening their own nursery, we are always looking at ways to attract new families. Our families old and new are very good at recommending us to their family and friends and our 'Outstanding' rating from Ofsted is beginning to have an impact, as new families are reporting that they have looked around 'Outstanding' settings first. I am pleased to say that every family that has paid preschool a visit has then joined us.

I would like to thank the preschool staff (Lynne Hinnigan, Jos Atherton and Lindsay Brown) for their continued dedication and hard work. Many thanks also to our Committee Members (Jen Croft, Hylde Hooper, Peter Davison and Pam Davison) who have greatly supported preschool over this challenging year, it is much appreciated.

**Amanda Summers, Preschool Manager**

## **29<sup>th</sup> Darlington (All Saints' and Salutation) Rainbows**

The Rainbows have had an extremely eventful 2023. We revisited our Rainbow promise with a caterpillar craft in which the girls had to colour and arrange the promise caterpillar in the correct order. The Rainbows enjoy colouring and it's a fun way to keep them engaged with the promise.

The Rainbows enjoyed testing out their inner scientist skills when making slime with our young leaders in small groups. We took advantage of the weather and did this messy activity outside. This was to work towards their innovation badge and also building teamwork skills with the girls. They absolutely loved this session and even wanted to take the slime home!

Another craft the girls enjoyed was when they made sock puppets, they were able to assemble the puppets themselves and once done we discussed facial expressions and how to read people's emotions.

Towards the end of the year, the Rainbows learnt how to make s'mores. This delicious activity went down a treat and the girls learnt the importance of listening to instructions and acting sensibly as they were able to toast their own marshmallows on tea lights. The girls enjoyed having a bit of independence with this task and of course eating the s'mores at the end!

We enjoyed a Christmas trip to the cinema to watch 'Wish' with lots of other Rainbows, Brownies and Guides. We have also learnt the alphabet in sign language and sing a sign 'Happy Birthday' on a Rainbow's special day.

All of the Rainbows have completed their bronze award and two of our oldest Rainbows have also completed their silver and gold awards - the first time that our rainbow group have handed out these badges! Overall, the Rainbows love coming to our weekly meetings and always leave with a smile on their faces; let's see what the next year brings our unit.

**Aisha Unit Guider in Training & Jen Steel, Rainbow Leader.**

## **12<sup>th</sup> All Saints Brownies**

The Brownies have had another full year of activities, outings, challenges and fun. We have welcomed six new Brownies this year and the pack is up to 21, with some leaving and going to Guides in 2024.

We have completed many challenges from our Brownie Program with several of them achieving their Bronze and Silver Awards and in the next couple of months Gold Awards will be issued.

We have attended two Church Parades this year with the girls enjoying processing the flags for both Harvest Festival and Remembrance Service.

Our unit Helper Sophie Finch completed her Leadership Qualification last summer and has become a valuable Assistant Leader for the unit. We have also helped Grace, who joined us last year, to complete her bronze Duke of Edinburgh service section and has remained with us, which the Brownies love. Anya has also started with us in September to complete her bronze Duke of Edinburgh service section. Anya was one of our Brownies and it is great when they return to help in the unit.

The girls had a fun night learning Line Dancing with three Ladies coming in to teach them some new skills and simple dances. The older girls joined in when the ladies showed them a more complicated dance and did very well to quickly pick up the moves.

We have taken the Brownies away for two weekends this year, jointly with St Columba's Brownies. They enjoy meeting up with old friends and making new ones. They had great fun in small groups, making puppets and props, creating characters and stories and these were all acted out on the puppet stage, which belongs to Brown Owl and is almost as old!



The Pack attended the performance by STEPPS Panto at Hummersknott School in December which was enjoyed by the girls. We also attended Vue to see the film Wish. This was a private showing with approximately 180 Rainbows, Brownies and Guides from Stephenson Division.

In February we joined Woodland District, and we took eight of the older Brownies to London for the day. We visited the Natural History Museum, but the main attraction was the Harry Potter Studios. This was quite an adventure as three of our girls had never been to London and certainly not travelled on the London Underground, they all had a great day and coped very well with all the walking and traveling. British Rail Staff were very helpful when our train home was cancelled and they managed to find the majority of us seats together and allowed us on the train early as there was 60 of us.

As always, I would like to thank Ali Skilbeck for her support and dedication over the years. Also, Sophie Finch who has joined us and is starting on her leadership guiding journey, we very much appreciate her commitment and enthusiasm. We look forward to working together to give the Brownies new opportunities, challenges and fun during the year ahead.

**Anita Wilson, Brown Owl, Alison Skilbeck, Assistant and Sophie Finch, Unit Helper**

## **29<sup>th</sup> Darlington Guides**

As ever, the Guides have enjoyed a year of variety, with activities including creating paper flower bouquets for Mother's Day, decorating mugs to celebrate the King's Coronation and pancake making.

We also carried out a range of activities around the theme of 'Take Action', where the girls explored different methods of researching and campaigning for causes which are important to them and their future.

Some of our girls joined the County Camp weekend where they learned traditional camp skills and shared in the fun. The unit also enjoyed completing Ethel's Challenge badge where they learned about traditional Girlguiding activities and heritage.

Outside of the meeting place, we enjoyed trampolining at ROF59 and our summer walk, which this year was through the Denes, finishing with ice cream treats at Kaspas.

**Louise Gibson, Unit Leader, 29<sup>th</sup> Darlington Guides**

## **29<sup>th</sup> Salutation Brownies**

29th Darlington Brownies have had another busy year. We've been on a litter pick in our local area and were shocked by how much litter we collected. We celebrated the King's coronation with a tea party and met a Guide Dog in training which was particularly special for us as one of our Brownies is blind.

We've celebrated Burns Night with haggis and a ceilidh, Halloween and Christmas with parties and food, Diwali by making diva lamps and ladoos and Mother's Day by making 100 flower posies to share with mums in our community.

We've also earned lots of badge including the Live Smart, Network and Make Change skills builders, tonnes of interest badges as well as awarding three girls their Gold Award.

24 girls enjoyed Brownie Holiday at Camp House with a Roald Dahl theme and we're busy planning this year's visit for the summer.

We couldn't do without the hard work from our leaders; Sophie, Rachel, Abi and Layna as well as our guide helper Sophie!

**Jenny Groves, Brown Owl**

## **Millennium Hall**

Bookings have reduced slightly, which I suspect is due to the cost of living these days. Once again, I send thanks to Pam and Colin for their support and for all the work they do for the Trust.

I have taken the decision to stand down from this role, which I took on in 2012, so am looking for someone who is prepared to take this on. It is not too onerous, but organisational skills and access to a computer are recommended and full training will be given by me! I will keep in this position until a replacement is found, but please do come forward if this may be of interest to you.

**Dee Wastnedge, Booking Secretary**

## **All Saints' Millennium Centre Trust (Darlington) Limited**

The Millennium Centre is run by an independent charitable company, the Millennium Trust, which is limited by guarantee. The land on which the Centre is built is leased for 99 years (from 1997) to the company by the church. To be a member of the company one has to be on the electoral roll of the parish. The body of trustees consists of 12 members; the vicar is ex officio, seven are nominated by the PCC and one each nominated by the Bishop of Durham, the Mayor of Darlington, the senior ward councillor for Park West and the Principal of Polam Hall School.

The Centre continues to be well used by a variety of groups; the All Saints' Pre-School, that remains OFSTED "Outstanding", uniformed young people's organisations, various community groups and increasingly Voices of Darlington. The Centre has also been used for church activities such as coffee mornings and parish lunches plus a number of private parties.

Our income for the year to December 2023 was £16,594 but our cash reserves fell to £15,303. Managing our operating costs is a continual challenge particularly with the recent escalation in energy costs.

The principal maintenance issue has been the unreliability of the electric water heaters in the toilets. The heater in the gentlemen's toilets burst but it was some time before this was discovered.

The damage caused resulted in the complete rebuilding of the toilets. The trust is grateful to Eleanor and Kevin Winkworth for their hard work liaising with our insurers and their contractors.

There has also been an intermittent fault in the fire alarm system which has taken several visits of our service technician to find the root cause of the problem. This problem now seems to be resolved.

We are grateful to all those who have served as trustees over the past twelve months. We are particularly indebted to Dee Wastnedge who acts as Bookings Secretary, Pam Davison as Finance Director and Alison Barker as Company Secretary. This year Phil Elliott-Lyall and David Elliott retire by rotation after several years of valuable service. Our thanks to David Curran who, while no longer a trustee, continues to support the maintenance of the buildings and to Stephen Archer for his dedication and reliability as our cleaner.

The church family of All Saints' established the Trust, in collaboration with the Millennium Commission, to build and operate the Centre as a way of furthering its own vision to make this community more like God's kingdom. The All Saints' Millennium Centre remains an excellent example of how the Church contributes to the wellbeing of our society in ways that are often overlooked but which make a positive difference to countless people. Through this separate company, the Millennium Centre represents a gift from God to our church and our community.

**Colin Price, Acting chair, All Saints' Millennium Trust (Darlington) Ltd., April 2024**

## 6. WIDER CHURCH AND SYNOD REPORTS

### **Darlington Deanery Synod**

The first meeting of 2023 was hosted by the parish of St James the Great. Cyndi Hughes, the Debt Centre Manager of Christians Against Poverty, was the guest speaker and her presentation included some alarming figures relating to the levels of poverty in Darlington. The parish of St Andrew's, Haughton is heavily involved with CAP and Cyndi expressed a hope that other churches in Darlington would also get involved. The Reverend Mark East (Area Dean) updated members on the current position regarding vacancies within the Deanery and this was followed by reports from other "Enabling Group" leaders. This was the last meeting of the Triennium, and thanks were given to those members who would be standing down at their Annual Parochial Church meetings.

In July, Synod members arrived at the parish church of St Mary's, Cockerton for a celebration of the Eucharist as this was the first meeting of the new Triennium. The Area Dean welcomed everyone with a special mention to those newly elected members and this was followed by the election of officers. An update on current vacancies within the Deanery was also provided, with the vacant position at the Riverside Parishes soon to be filled by Anthony Smith, who was due to be licensed on 6 August. The closure of St John's scheduled for 1 August was to be followed by the formation of a new parish of St Herbert's with St John's. Other business covered included reminders about "The Christmas Journey", an update on the work of the "Tackling Poverty Group" and the impending need to review "The Deanery Plan - 2020 to 2025".

The final Synod meeting of the year took place in the church hall at St Columba's. John Thorley and David Smith gave a presentation on the work of the "Green Action Group" based at All Saints' Church. They explained how the "Eco Church" Silver standard had been achieved and encouraged other churches to visit the website in order to explore the criteria around this initiative. Members listened to reports from representatives of the "Enabling Groups" and also an update from James Harvey regarding some of the events being planned by St Cuthbert's. Before the meeting closed, charitable donations of £600 to both "Darlington Christians Against Poverty" and "Community Cohesion" were approved by Synod members.

### **Michael Shepherd (Deanery Treasurer)**

## **APPENDICES**

**THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF  
ALL SAINTS' AND SALUTATION BLACKWELL, DARLINGTON  
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

	Unrestricted Funds 2023	Restricted Funds 2023	Total Funds 2023	Unrestricted Funds 2022	Restricted Funds 2022	Total Funds 2022
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM:</b>	£	£	£	£	£	£
Donations and legacies	74,374	115	74,489	88,706	-	88,706
Charitable activities	6,395	48,257	54,652	12,397	55,466	67,863
Investments	25	70	95	4	7	11
Other trading activities	25,271	220	25,491	21,825	-	21,825
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<b>TOTAL INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS</b>	106,065	48,662	154,727	122,932	55,473	178,405
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
<b>EXPENDITURE ON:</b>						
Raising funds	9,748	-	9,748	8,241	-	8,241
Charitable activities	105,791	52,881	158,672	120,923	54,458	175,381
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<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	115,539	52,881	168,420	129,164	54,458	183,622
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
<b>NET INCOME / (EXPENDITURE)</b>	(9,474)	(4,219)	(13,693)	(6,232)	1,015	(5,217)
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:</b>						
<b>TOTAL FUNDS BROUGHT FORWARD</b>	82,278	58,435	140,713	88,510	57,420	145,930
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<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>	£ 72,804	54,216	127,020	£ 82,278	58,435	140,713
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**THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF  
ALL SAINTS' AND SALUTATION BLACKWELL, DARLINGTON**

**BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023**

	2023	2022
	£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>		
Tangible assets	6,749	358
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Bank accounts	125,568	140,344
Cash in hand	2,720	2,313
Debtors	13,057	11,435
Stocks	109	154
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	141,454	154,246
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Creditors - amounts falling due within one year	(21,183)	(13,891)
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<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>	120,271	140,355
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	127,020	140,713
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<b>NET ASSETS</b>	£ 127,020	£ 140,713
	=====	=====
<b>PARISH FUNDS</b>		
Unrestricted	72,804	82,278
Restricted	54,216	58,435
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<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	£ 127,020	£ 140,713
	=====	=====



THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF

ALL SAINTS' AND SALUTATION BLACKWELL, DARLINGTON

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

**INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM:**

**Income from donations and legacies**

	Unrestricted Funds 2023	Restricted Funds 2023	Total Funds 2023	Unrestricted Funds 2022	Restricted Funds 2022	Total Funds 2022
<b>Voluntary income</b>	£	£	£	£	£	£
Planned giving:-						
Envelopes, covenants and Gift Aid	54,159	-	54,159	57,584	-	57,584
Tax reclaim	13,807	-	13,807	16,340	-	16,340
Collections (loose plate)	5,627	-	5,627	12,204	-	12,204
Special Charity collections	216	-	216	1,321	-	1,321
Donations and Legacies	565	115	680	1,257	-	1,257
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	£ 74,374	115	74,489	£ 88,706	-	88,706
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

**Income from charitable activities**

**Church activities**

Occasional offices	6,395	-	6,395	12,397	-	12,397
All Saints Blackwell Pre-School	-	48,257	48,257	-	55,466	55,466
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	£ 6,395	48,257	54,652	£ 12,397	55,466	67,863
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

**Income from investments**

Interest receivable	25	70	95	4	7	11
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

**Other trading activities**

**Activities for generating funds**

Fundraising	18,910	220	19,130	15,545	-	15,545
Salutation Hall income (£1,000 Designated 2022)	4,189	-	4,189	3,926	-	3,926
Sundry income	2,172	-	2,172	2,354	-	2,354
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	£ 25,271	£ 220	25,491	£ 21,825	-	21,825
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

**Total Income and Endowments**

	£ 106,065	£ 48,662	£ 154,727	£ 122,932	£ 55,473	£ 178,405
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

**THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF**

**ALL SAINTS' AND SALUTATION BLACKWELL, DARLINGTON**

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

**EXPENDITURE**

**Raising funds**

	Unrestricted Funds 2023	Restricted Funds 2023	Total 2023	Unrestricted Funds 2022	Restricted Funds 2022	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Fundraising	9,748	-	9,748	8,241	-	8,241
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

**Charitable activities**

**Church activities and expenses**

Charitable and Mission giving	1,396	-	1,396	6,042	-	6,042
Parish share	60,000	-	60,000	70,000	-	70,000
Clergy expenses	315	-	315	363	-	363
Church running expenses	10,776	-	10,776	13,424	-	13,424
Cost of services	3,267	-	3,267	3,181	-	3,181
Church maintenance	807	-	807	1,379	-	1,379
Insurance	968	-	968	878	-	878
Salutation Hall (£770 designated)	3,118	-	3,118	1,998	-	1,998
Salaries, wages and honoraria	15,119	-	15,119	19,002	-	19,002
Sundry costs	5,588	-	5,588	393	-	393
Administration costs	2,978	-	2,978	2,853	-	2,853
Depreciation	159	-	159	160	-	160
Independent Examination	1,300	-	1,300	1,250	-	1,250
All Saints Blackwell Pre-School	-	52,881	52,881	-	54,458	54,458

£ 105,791	£ 52,881	158,672	£ 120,923	£ 54,458	175,381
=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

**Total Expenditure**

£ 115,539	52,881	168,420	£ 129,164	54,458	183,622
=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF

ALL SAINTS' AND SALUTATION BLACKWELL, DARLINGTON

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

FUNDRAISING					2023	2022
	Income	Expenses	Total	Donations Paid Out	Surplus/ (Deficit)	Surplus/ (Deficit)
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Garden Party	2,363	(293)	2,070	-	2,070	-
Christmas Fair	4,003	(215)	3,788	-	3,788	3,672
Parish Lunch Club	2,518	(1,454)	1,064	232	832	293
Magazine	1,101	(1,620)	(519)		(519)	(494)
Ladies Fellowship (excluding bank interest)	2,372	(2,281)	91	200	(109)	155
Tea and Coffee	790	(187)	603	-	603	654
Flower Fund	355	(304)	51	-	51	164
Social Committee	2,259	(968)	1,291	-	1,291	1,356
Badminton	188	(188)	-	-	-	-
100 Club	1,585	(1,215)	370	-	370	466
Bell Ringing	261	-	261	270	(9)	3
Circle Dancing	808	(720)	88	100	(12)	(165)
Parent & Toddler	307	(303)	4	-	4	-
Men's Group	-	-	-	-	-	-
	£ 18,910	£ (9,748)	£ 9,162	£ 802	£ 8,360	£ 6,104
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THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF

ALL SAINTS' AND SALUTATION BLACKWELL, DARLINGTON

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	2023		2022	
	£	£	£	£
<b>CHARITABLE GIVING</b>				
PCC : Children's Society		216		370
North Park Care Centre		155		-
Family Help Darlington		121		-
Alzheimers UK		51		-
Cancer Research UK		51		508
St. Teresa's Hospice		-		910
Ukraine Appeal		-		614
MacMillan Nurses		-		445
Parkinsons UK		-		374
NHS Blood & Transplant Charity		-		364
British Red Cross Ukraine Appeal		-		336
British Heart Foundation		-		154
Leukaemia UK		-		145
Cancer Support		-		123
Great NE Air Ambulance		-		119
Durham Wildlife Trust		-		116
Marie Curie		-		102
Royal British Legion		-		82
Darlington Town Mission		-		80
		<hr/>		<hr/>
		594		4,842
Groups:				
Parish Lunch Club: Christian Aid	232		-	
Ladies Fellowship: USPG	100		100	
Ladies Fellowship: King's Church Foodbank	100		-	
Circle Dancing: St. Teresa's Hospice	100		200	
Circle Dancing: Ukraine Appeal	-		200	
Bell Ringers: King's Church Foodbank	270		700	
		<hr/>		<hr/>
		802		1,200
		<hr/>		<hr/>
	£	1,396	£	6,042
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