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 2024 – April 2025

The Parish of All Saints and Salutation Blackwell

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1. INTRODUCTION

This is the twenty seventh 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 2024 to April 2025. 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

During the vacancy it falls again 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.

We started this PCC year with Jen off work due to ill-health, but the weekend of the Garden Party in June we received the news that she had resigned with immediate effect, a situation that plunged us immediately into vacancy. We wish Jen and her mum well with their new life and whatever she decides to pursue beyond Blackwell.

We are grateful that we have such an able ministry team, Brian, Debby, Keith, Kevin, Andy, Debs, Tim and Raymond 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 even more evident since we entered vacancy. I especially want to focus on the contribution by Brian Holmes. Brian's wise leadership and support has been invaluable, and I and the PCC cannot thank him enough. I often joke that I'm Brian's self-appointed minder trying to manage the workload that he takes on! And he doesn't always listen to me! But in reality, he offers me as much support as I try to give him. Thank you Brian.

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. So far, we have managed to cover most of our usual pattern of worship, but we hope that you will continue to be understanding when on occasions (hopefully few) when we are unable to find a priest to offer communion.

The life of our church continues to be 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. Volunteers to bolster these rotas are always welcome, so if there is something in church that you think that you would like to be involved with, please come and speak to one of the ministry team or the wardens.

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 – Pat Telfer, Eileen Bruce, Betty Wood, Alasdair MacConachie, Barbara Simpson and Ross Ryder. Welcoming 450+ mourners to Alasdair MacConachie's funeral last month was a privilege but this could not have happened without the support of the working group (Brian Holmes, Colin Price, Andy Hopkins, David Smith, Mike Fryer, Myself and the funeral director) that we convened to plan and deliver this, along with the other members of the congregation that helped on the day. Thank you to all of you.

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 working group that was established following this vision day continued to meet this year and reports to the PCC, however some of the initial projects that were initiated by this group (Christmas card with activities flyer, have now been passed to other PCC committees.

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, although through the vision day review and the Vacancy Audit process we recognise that there is much that can still be accomplished. The MAP priorities 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. The working group together with the Ministry team continue to explore development of discipleship opportunities. This year the Lent course focussed on the book 'Lentwise' by Paula Gooder.

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. We are grateful to Colin and Susan Price for leading the reintroduction of the Wednesday Afternoon Reading Group and for hosting it.

Café Church which was introduced following the three-year Partnership for Missional Church (PMC) programme has continued bi-monthly on a Sunday afternoon until the end of 2024. A decision was taken by the ministry group with the support of the PCC to suspend this service, partly due to capacity within the ministry team to prepare and lead these services and to give the team and the PCC the opportunity to review whether the service in its current format is meeting the needs highlighted by PMC and the most recent Vision Day. Thank you to the music group who have contributed significantly to these services and are patiently awaiting the future direction.

Community Outreach

After reporting last year that the Community Outreach Group had ben unable to re-convene due to lack of membership, I am pleased to report that the group has been re-established over the past year with a new membership under the leadership of Jonathan Barker. As you will see from their report, they are still finding their feet, but new ideas have been introduced (church lighting) and older ones revisited (warm space, dementia awareness).

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. 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 a Burns Supper, and a Harvest ceilidh. Hosting a local touring theatre group and our Summer Garden Party and Christmas Fayre all also offer opportunities to engage with the Paish and wider communities. contribution that they have made

to the smooth and efficient running of our Church and Hall. Thank you to everyone involved in these activities both in the delivery and by attending.

Finally thankyou to the dedicated small group of volunteers who provide the refreshments after the 10.30 Sunday and 10am Wednesday services continue to provide a pleasant time to meet up and chat.

Ministry to young people

The Tiny Tots Group continues to go from strength to strength. Thank you to Andy Young and his team of volunteers, Caroline and Sandra, for all their hard work.

At the time of writing plans are in place to host our first Holy Week activities for children for many years led by Andy and his team with additional help from several members of the congregation. We're starting small with just one morning but hope that we can build on this for the future.

Our uniformed organisations and their families continue to be invited to Parade services throughout the year, including Mothering Sunday and Remembrance Day. The 12th All Saints Brownies led by Brown Owl Anita Wilson have decorated both the Christmas tree and supported our Mothering Sunday service, producing the bouquets of flowers and leading the prayers. Later in this report you can read reports from all 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 is 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."

Andy Young leads short worship opportunities for the pre-school in church every term.

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 team, led by Rev Brian Holmes, 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 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.

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). Communication is an area that we cannot be complacent about as a church.

This year we also established a Communications Group as a subcommittee of the PCC, chaired by David Smith to focus on how we improve communication within the church congregation and increase our visibility in the Parish and wider community.

We continue to develop our website and other social media platforms. Thank you to Andy Hopkins for all he does supporting 'all things IT' in our Church, and particularly this year for getting the screen in the foyer working again. Thank you also to Ian Groves for doing much more than his fair share of the Zoom broadcasting rota. Particular thanks go to all those members of the congregation who faithfully deliver bundles of leaflets, Christmas cards and parish magazines.

The Parish Magazine (10 editions per year) continues to be 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.

I also need to thank the members of the PCC for their support and advice throughout the year. Thank you firstly to Andy Hopkins and Ian Groves who step down from the PCC at this APCM after completing two successive 3-year terms. I was grateful that both Peter Davison and Clare Curran were persuaded to revisit their decisions to step down from their roles as PCC Treasurer and Planned Giving Treasurer respectively.

Dee Wastnedge finally managed to handover her role as Hall Bookings Secretary and Lauren Curry has stepped seamlessly into the role. Thank you to both Dee and Lauren for their hard work supporting the smooth running of events in the church and halls.

Nicky Waller took us by surprise when she decided that the time had come to leave her duties in the Parish Office, and she retired at the end of February. The office, which serves not only this parish, but also the Parish of Coniscliffe, will never be the same again without her. Thank you Nicky for all your years of dedicated service. At the time of writing, we are advertising for Nicky's replacement.

One of the highlights of the year was the Sunday in August when we celebrated Brian and Beryl's Diamond wedding anniversary. Their initial idea of a cake and some fizz after the service was never going to be enough to celebrate the life and faith of this exceptional couple. It also came at a point in the year when as a congregation we needed some positivity and something to celebrate. A full scale All Saint's catering operation was mobilised, and a great time was had by all.

And now a final word on the search for a new incumbent to lead us. Since our last vacancy the Diocese introduced an additional step to the process for recruitment of a new incumbent, the Vacancy Audit Process (VAP), which inform a new Parish Profile. This process is normally led by one of a small group of Diocesan facilitators who work with parishes to undertake this audit and usually there would be a delay until a facilitator has capacity. However, we were fortunate that the Rev. John Musson was tasked with doing this whilst waiting to take up his post as one of the Diocese's three new Interim Change Ministers. At PCC meetings in September, October and November John led the PCC through the process and workbooks that we each completed. These workbooks are split into four sections (Mission, Buildings, Finance and Leadership and Governance), with each section containing a mixture of factual and open questions. John also met with many individuals and groups and submitted his final report to the Diocese in January and it was discussed at the Bishop's Leadership Team meeting in February where the decision was made to proceed to recruitment, and we were subsequently asked to start writing the Parish Profile. So hopefully there is a light, and the potential recruitment of a new incumbent might mean that I won't have to write this section of the report again.

In summary, this has been another 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, as we work towards welcoming a new incumbent.

Sandra Whiston, Churchwarden and Vice-chair of PCC

The Church Wardens Report

Sandra started the churchwarden's report last year by commenting that 'we had experienced another year that has continued to challenge us in many ways'! Well, we need to reiterate that statement again this year as we approach the end of our third year as churchwardens. We have had another year that has continued to challenge us, both good and not so good ways.

Our learning journey continues about what makes the life of not just this church, but also the wider Church of England function, our roles as Churchwardens within it and the 'rules' that we must operate within.

We are also 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 last absence, her resignation and the subsequent vacancy, there has been an ongoing sense of everyone rallying round and being willing to work together with a strong sense of fellowship and faith. To them all we would like to say a big thank you.

It continues to be a privilege to serve as churchwarden, and we are so grateful for the help and support of Brian and the ministry team, our Pro-wardens Mike Fryer and Jonathan Barker, and to the members of the PCC, but particularly to our ever supportive 'other halves' Keith and Alison.

Sandra Whiston and David Smith, Churchwardens.

PCC Secretary's Report

There have been 6 PCC meetings held during the PCC year 2024/25 and one Vacancy Audit Process meeting led by John Musson. All meetings were well attended and were chaired by Sandra Whiston (warden).

Thank you to everyone who has contributed reports for consideration by the PCC during the year and thank you to all of the PCC for their support.

Eleanor Winkworth, PCC Secretary

Electoral Roll Report

In accordance with Church Representation Rules 2020, a full revision of the roll has been carried out. This requires an application form to be completed and only those people who have returned a completed form are included.
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 88% live inside the DL3 postal district.
A copy of the Roll is available for inspection in the Parish Office.

Year		**Number on Roll**
2019	Full revision	189
2022	Partial revision	193
2023	Partial revision	191
2024	Partial revision	172
2025	Full revision	106

David V Smith, Electoral Roll Officer

2. WORSHIP AND FAITH DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Parish Readers

It's been another busy and fulfilling year, and the Readers have continued to play their part in enabling the running of services across the Benefice. As well as preaching and leading worship services and taking the deacon's role at the Eucharist, each of us is also involved in in serving the churches in a number of different ways. These have included pastoral work, assisting in funeral ministry, involvement in the running of the Bereavement Journey, being part of the Parish Magazine Editorial Team, running the Tiny Tots Playgroup, administrative duties, running the Men's Group, and being involved in Lent and Bible Study Groups.

As I said in last year's report, it is always a privilege to serve the parishes of Blackwell and Coniscliffe as we do, but we could not do it without the faithful prayers of the congregations. We are grateful for the support and encouragement of Rev. Brian Holmes in our work, but most of all, for the grace of the loving God who calls us to serve him. If anyone in the congregation feels the call to look into exploring the role of Reader or Licensed Lay Minister, please don't let the opportunity to speak to Brian or to any one of us just slip by. There are many gifts to be shared, which can be used in God's service, and life is never dull!

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 preparing the church for the service which include funerals, baptisms and weddings and they rise to the occasion to fulfil their duties.
The services that take place run smoothly and efficiently which only reflects in the vergers' dedication and commitment. A thank you must go to Alan Waller, Phil Elliott-Lyall and Eileen Auty. Eilen is the newest member to join the verging team, and she has taken to it like a duck to water.
A great big thank you to you all. May we continue to work in harmony as a team for many years to come. God bless you all.
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.

This past year has seen the publication of several damning reports on historical abuse within the church and this has led to heightened media interest in safeguarding and the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The importance of ensuring that everyone is aware of their

responsibilities in terms of safeguarding, including training for the volunteers who give so freely of their time to carry out the various roles within our Church, has never been more important.

Thirtyone:eight, the UK's leading independent Christian safeguarding charity, supports the annual safeguarding awareness campaign for churches, Safeguarding Sunday (17th November 2024). This year the emphasis of the campaign was '*Let's Talk About It*', encouraging churches to be more transparent about their safeguarding practices. For the first time we participated in Safeguarding Sunday. Thank you to Keith for tackling this challenging topic in his sermon in the same week that the Archbishop of Canterbury resigned.

We continue to implement guidance cascaded from the Church of England via the Diocesan Safeguarding team and to use the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard and Hub to support our record keeping. These tools have recently been updated to enable us to evidence compliance with the National Safeguarding Standards. Sandra attended training from the Diocese on the National Standards and these updates to the online tools.

The National Safeguarding Standards are essential for us to understand the quality and, most importantly, the impact of our safeguarding activity in both the Diocese and each parish. At parish level, safeguarding is the joint responsibility of each PCC and the PCC received a focussed session on these standards recently.

The National Safeguarding Standards sets out five standards within a quality assurance framework, each with multiple indicators. Some apply to the diocesan safeguarding arrangements, some at parish level, and many across both diocesan and parish arrangements.

National standards	**Number of Indicators**
Standard 1 - Culture, Leadership and Capacity	12
Standard 2 - Prevention	11
Standard 3 - Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk	12
Standard 4 - Victims and Survivors	9
Standard 5 - Learning, Supervision and Support	10

Within the Diocese we have been asked to focus during the first 6 months on standards 3 & %, with a further standard to be introduced from May 2025.

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. We find these meetings very helpful. Recent discussions have included updates on the National Safeguarding Standards, the Independent Safeguarding Audit of Durham Diocese and General Synod discussions on independent oversight of safeguarding arrangements.

Sandra Whiston and Mike Fryer, Parish Safeguarding Officers

Readers and Sidespeople

There are 24 parishioners regularly involved, some just readers or sidespeople, some are on both rotas. We are very grateful for everyone's involvement.
It is gratifying when members of the congregation express a wish to become involved in this important part of our worship. Please contact the office if you would like to be included in the next six-monthly rota.

Music Director Report

This year, we have been able to increase the amount of music provided for services, as well as fundraise for the church directly.

The choir has sung for major services, including those at Christmas, and has also started to make evensong a regular monthly service, with attendance in double figures again. I am very grateful to those choristers who are willing to support us in doing that, as many of them are busy in their own churches, especially in the Christmas period. The choir itself is now numbering around 35 members. I'm hoping that, in time, it might lead to a regular Sunday morning choir, maybe once a month, even if it is only 8 or so strong. This isn't a major issue, however, as the congregational singing is strong, and getting stronger during communion, too.

We have a very healthy choral library, partly owned by church, partly a separate resource. This enables us to keep running costs down, as well as to support other local choirs through loans of music. I am indebted to my librarians who spend hours maintaining this resource in good order as well as arranging distribution to choristers and music loans.

Our band, like the choir, is a positive force in the community, bringing people into the All Saints'. They have performed at a couple of services and events. Numbers are now in the low teens. I'm hoping to grow this to make the band a more stable ensemble.

Funds from band and choir events have been donated to church, something I'm hoping to build on.

Last year we started our music festival, which seemed to work well. I'm hoping this year will be as good, raising funds as well as attracting people into the church. The late Easter has pushed this back, so advertising is a little late, but I hope the word will get out. The joint concerts raised about £1000 for the church, thanks largely to the hard work of the ensembles. My thanks to them and my hope is that this will continue to grow.

The church is getting a well-deserved reputation as a concert space, which I hope can be a source of income without too much extra work for our congregation. In addition, it gets our church known, brings people in who may return as worshippers and helps to keep the place vibrant. A particular joy has been having the Bute Wind Quintet, who I hope will start to use us as a regular venue.

Thanks again to all the people who have had a hand in running events as well as singing, playing and organising.

Andrew Young, Director of Music

Music Group

This year the Music Group continued to support worship in the Cafe Church services. We were delighted to welcome a new singer and a flautist to the group during the year. However last November, Cafe Church Services were closed.

In 2009, John Dobson encouraged Dorothy and Lee to set up the group. The aim was to enrich the music of the church by combining the contemporary with the traditional. The group found its niche at Sunday Praise Services and occasionally played in other services. After COVID, we were instrumental in setting up Cafe Church after the demise of the Praise service.

We had been promised that there would be a continuing role for the Music Group. As yet, this has not happened. We thank everyone who has been a group member and all those who supported the various services we have played in during the last 16 years.

Dorothy Puchala, Music Group Coordinator

3. Stewardship: Finances & Grounds Reports

PCC Treasurers Report

In 2024, the church continued to face financial challenges. The rising cost of living and a decline in attendance have both contributed to a decrease in income.

Details of the financial results for 2024 can be found in the "Abridged Accounts" section of this report, which includes extracts from the Annual Report and Financial Statements.

Income and Expenditure

Total receipts on unrestricted funds decreased to £101,646 (2023: £106,065). While total expenditure on unrestricted funds also reduced, it did so less significantly, amounting to £113,736 (2023: £115,539). As a result, the deficit on unrestricted funds increased to £12,090 (2023: £9,474).

A concerning trend is the continued decline in income from Planned Giving, which fell to £43,470 (2023: £54,012), a reduction of nearly 20%. This decrease is particularly troubling.

To address the growing deficit, the PCC reduced its parish share contribution to the Diocese for the year from £60,000 to £50,000. Unfortunately, this measure did not have the desired effect on the overall financial situation.

Fundraising and Donations

On a more positive note, fundraising efforts performed better in 2024. Both the Garden Party and the Christmas Fair saw improved financial outcomes compared to the previous year. Additionally, events held in our church during the Music Festival raised £1,000 for church funds.

Our church benefits from the dedication of several groups that not only foster community but also raise funds for the church. These include:

- Social Committee: £1,685
- 100 Club: £299
- Ladies Fellowship: £162 (before donations)
- Circle Dancing: £252 (before donations)
- Tea and Coffee: £541
- Parish Lunch Club: -£417 (before donations)
- Flower Fund: -£148
- Tiny Tots Playgroup: £50

An increase in the price of the church magazine also helped reduce its deficit to £61.

I would also like to express thanks to Colleen Rhodes, whose ongoing efforts with "Colleen's Crafts" raised £123 for the church in 2024 (2023: £161). We are very grateful for her continued support.

Restricted Funds

While the unrestricted funds deficit was significant, we were fortunate to have a surplus on restricted funds, which amounted to £14,523 (2023: deficit of £4,219).

Our Pre-School had a particularly successful year, posting an overall surplus of £8,109 (2023: deficit of £4,554). During the year it applied for and was awarded a £25,000 grant from Darlington Borough Council for the building and installation of bespoke toilets for the children's exclusive use. Unfortunately, the grant did not fully cover the total cost of £31,230, leaving a shortfall of £6,230, which was taken from reserves. The Pre-School would have had a surplus of £14,339 had the shortfall not been necessary, a significant achievement.

We were also very grateful to receive a generous anonymous donation of £10,000, restricted for use on Church Projects. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the donors for their kind contribution.

Overall Financial Position

The overall net surplus for the year was £2,433, a marked improvement over the deficit of £13,693 in 2023. However, without the Pre-School's strong performance and the generous donation, we would have faced a deficit more than the previous year.

Unrestricted reserves decreased by £12,090, bringing the total to £60,714, while restricted reserves increased by £14,523 to £68,739, giving total reserves of £129,453 (2023: £127,020).

Outlook for 2025

Despite the deficit in unrestricted funds, the PCC has decided to maintain its parish share pledge to the Diocese for 2025 at £50,000. We continue to believe strongly in the doctrine that the parish share contributes significantly to the stipends and housing of clergy across the diocese, which in turn supports parishes less financially fortunate than ours.

Looking ahead to 2025, we anticipate another challenging year. We will continue to carefully monitor costs, manage expenditure, and seek ways to increase income with the goal of returning to a position of surplus.

Peter Davison, Treasurer

Abridged Accounts – please see the Appendices on pages: 38, 39, 40, 41, 42 & 43

Planned Giving

All Saints and Salutation Blackwell – Giving generously

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly, or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" …… 2 Corinthians 9:7

Generosity is at the heart of our faith. We believe in a generous God and our own generosity is a testament and hallmark of our faith in action. The ministry and mission of our church and The Church of England is largely funded through the incredible generosity of those who give to it.

As I write this report, I reflect back to this time last year, I shared that I was stepping down as Planned Giving Treasurer. However, I continued in role as there was no-one to take over from me. This last year I have worked with the Finance Committee and Revd Brian Holmes to embrace our Churches Planned Giving activity. I have also worked with Andy Hopkins and Paul Childs from the Diocese to improve our website reflecting more accurate information and links. We have also set up a link allowing people on-line to give to our church at the click of a button, technology, where would we be without it.

We had a generosity/planned giving session during Harvest last year, this was truly embraced by our parishioners, and I thank you again for your support. We sought extra giving through using the yellow envelopes, and this raised £2041.50 of which I understand the PCC gifted 10% to the Darlington Town Mission. We also provided a lot of information regarding the Church of England's Parish Giving Scheme rather than Parishioners using standing order, we were blessed with some 10 regular givers moving to the Parish Giving Scheme.

We have taken time to thank parishioners for their giving at our services, using the weekly pew sheets, and Parish Magazine. We provide through our Treasurer a full account of our spending, saving and giving, it is import that you feel very much part of this Parish and understand how we spend wisely the generous giving we receive.

As always, we do need to grow our income, and we need to continually maintain the church and its buildings, we cannot deliver this without the giving from our parishioners, and other fund-raising activities. Please do review your giving and if you can increase, we would appreciate this greatly.

Thank you for 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], 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 principal project in the last year has been the provision of an infants' bathroom off the Millennium Hall. Such a facility avoids the pre-school children having to use the female bathroom and all the safeguarding concerns that flow from that. The project includes two cubicles with infant toilets, hand wash basins and a nappy changing table together with associated lighting, heating and ventilation. The work started during the summer holidays with the installation of the doorway and was completed during the autumn half term. Permission to carry out this project has been sought and received from the Millennium

trustees, the Diocese and the National Lottery Community Fund (as successor to the Millennium Commission). The Millennium Centre is not subject to faculty jurisdiction. The total cost of the work was £31k supported by a Local Authority grant of £25k and £6k from Pre-School reserves.

2. At Salutation Hall the kitchen has been cleaned and redecorated plus new curtains fitted. A grant application is in hand to renovate the windows.

3. The audio system in the church was improved last year, however, there continues to be some electrical interference in the organ amplification system. This remains under investigation.

4. The mower garage (container) project was delivered including the planting of some shrubs which will, eventually, soften the visual impact. Murphy's law seemed to apply to the project with problems with the concrete supply and the crane on the container delivery vehicle being temperamental.

5. Energy usage information has recently been submitted to the Diocese as part of their annual data collection exercise. In 2024 across our three buildings, All Saints' Church, Salutation Hall and the Millennium Centre, 14,195 kwh of electricity and 90,731 kwh of gas were consumed at an equivalent cost of £14k. This amounts to 24.2 tonnes of net CO_2 emissions. To offset this by sponsoring a re-afforestation scheme in Brazil would require an investment of £750. Some of our Millennium Centre electricity usage is offset by our solar generation (2023 – 9,000 kwh) although there is no carbon credit for power exported to the grid.

6. The lion's share of the CO_2 that we produce is through burning gas for space and water heating. Our heating controls (timings) are old technology and difficult to use making efficiencies through easily adjusted "on/off" settings difficult to achieve. Installing newer technology, such as "TADO", would help us to be more efficient. The estimated cost of providing such a system, including reinforcing the wi-fi coverage, is estimated to be £1,200. We have been awarded a grant of £660, as part of the "Quick Wins" programme sponsored by the Diocese. So far, the reinforcement of the wi-fi system has been recently completed but required interference issues with the "zoom" camera to be resolved. The installation of the new heating control systems is now planned for later in 2025.

7. All the energy meters have been upgraded to "smart" technology and the roof to the gas meter house replaced.

8. Some improvements were made to the security of the Centre with new locks on the two external steel doors, the installation of a letter box and the addition of three key safes.

9. Numerous other minor tasks were carried out by the team throughout the year including portable appliance testing, servicing of the boilers, fire alarms and extinguishers plus the

installation of LED spotlights in church, the cleaning of the soft play area surface, repairs to the oven and the reversal of the kitchen door to improve access to the kitchen cupboards.

10. 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

Although the hall continues to show signs of age, 2024 has been a reasonably successful year in terms of usage, with both regular and party bookings contributing positively.

Income and Expenditure

Rental income saw a slight decrease, totalling £3,598 (2023: £4,189).

In response to feedback from the hall's running group, it was agreed that some interior improvements were necessary. As a result, £1,357 was spent during the year on enhancing the hall's décor. This included painting the walls of both the kitchen and main hall, replacing curtains and curtain rails, and purchasing new kitchen crockery and cutlery. The hall was also given a thorough deep clean. These improvements have significantly enhanced the overall appearance and atmosphere of the hall, and we've already received positive feedback from both current and potential users.

Unfortunately, a regular user from 2023 was unable to settle their outstanding rent, resulting in a write-off of £312 in 2024.

As a result of these factors, total expenditure increased to £3,913 (2023: £3,118), leading to an overall deficit of £315, compared to a surplus of £1,071 in 2023.

Future Plans

Looking ahead, the working group is currently exploring the possibility of applying for a grant to help fund the replacement of the hall's aging windows. This update would not only improve the building's aesthetics but also increase its appeal to future users.

Pam Davison, Salutation Hall Committee

Health and Safety Officer Report

The H&S Policy, covering both church and Millennium Trust, has been signed.

A publicity drive to raise the awareness of Health and Safety has been initiated.

All areas of the inside of the Church and Millennium Centre have now been subjected to full safety audits and follow up audits have been completed on most areas.

A major audit was carried out on Salutation Hall, which was found to be in a greatly improved condition to the previous audit with only a few minor issues.

The grounds, car park and field have not yet been assessed but there have been anecdotal reports of poor lighting in the car park.

A major review of the church, Millennium Hall and entrance foyer took place prior to the funeral of Alasdair MacConachie. Two minor incidents took place during the service which were dealt with: 1 A minor finger cut, which was treated with a plaster. 2 An elderly mourner felt overcome by the heat, was helped outside to a seat and given a drink of water.

Areas of concern:

- Use of loft ladders
- Storage of items at height
- Lone working
- Trailing wires

No serious accidents or serious near misses took place during the year.

David Smith, Health & Safety Officer

4. CHURCH COMMUNITIES GROUPS & ACTIVITIES REPORTS

Social Committee

We were blessed with sunshine for the second year running for the Garden Party and it was again a pleasure to see lots of young families enjoying the sunshine on the field. Similarly, the Christmas Fayre was also well attended, and we received lots of positive feedback, and it was good to see some new faces, especially the children's choir that sang for us. Both events were successful and raised a significant amount towards church funds. Thank you to Andy Hopkins for continuing to lead the organisation of these major but important undertakings for our church.

We held a Harvest Ceilidh again at the beginning of October. Although enjoyed by those who attended, there was limited interest and support from the congregation. In view of the challenge of selling sufficient tickets to cover the significant cost of the band and we have decided that we will hang up our dancing shoes for the time being and replace the ceilidh with a Harvest Quiz and Supper in 2025.

In January we again supported the Burn's Night in collaboration with St. Edwins. Again, it was a well-supported by both congregations and visitors and enjoyed by all. Thank you to Eleanor Winkworth for leading the organisation.

In February, we welcomed the Castle Players again. Their winter touring production this year was 'The Inn at the Top', tales of life at the highest pub in Britain. 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, October and March. Again, an increase on our traditional March and September dates. The May coffee morning raised funds for Christian Aid Week instead of doing the door-to door envelope collection, whilst the October one in collaboration with Pre-school raised funds for additional activities for the pre-school children. In 2024 we trialled 'Coffee and Chat' on the first Saturday of the months that there isn't a coffee morning. After positive feedback these have now been established as regular date in the diary. These low-key events are intended to offer the opportunity to meet up with friends for fellowship over a cup of tea or coffee in the Enid Smith Rooms and it would be good if we could encourage the local community to join us.

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 and others willing to join our ranks. We understand that not all events will be 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, except for our work on the Christmas Fayre and Garden Party, but consider funds raised through other social events as a happy collateral benefit. The most important factor is the promotion of fellowship and outreach to the parish and wider community.

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".

Due to scheduling difficulties, the group has only met face to face a couple of times during the year, however work continues as listed below:

Magazine articles

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

The Giving Tree

Discontinued due to lack of support.

Eco-Church

As reported last year, a decision was made not to work towards the Gold award as it would require too much work and detailed form filling.

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. As reported last year, the wildflower meadow has not been a success so far, but help is being given by the gardener. The commemorative plaques for the late Queen Elizabeth's 70th Jubilee and the Coronation of King Charles III have been put in place.

Community and Global Engagement

The Group (via John Thorley) is working with Martin Howard who is co-ordinating the Durham Diocesan "Net Zero Carbon by 2030" initiative.

David Smith, Chair of Green Action Group

Communications Group

"This group will lead on development of internal and external communications on behalf of the Church and will include: the website, email communications, publicity for events and special services, the Parish Magazine, Zoom, the Parish Database and social media."

A copy of "100 ways to get your church noticed" by Neil Pugmire has been purchased and is being used as a guide to areas where improvements can be made.

Internal communications:
Mailchimp
This continues to be a valuable means of communications to parishioners and others.

Parish Magazine
DS, KW and EL have agreed to continue as editors.

Notice boards (including Salutation Church)
The internal noticeboards are maintained by the parish secretary who routinely reviews them and removes outdated content.

TV in Foyer
There were interface issues which have been addressed by AH.

Wi-Fi
A contract with a new provider (BT) has been agreed, giving cost savings. However, the speed will not improve significantly as fibre optic cable has not yet been installed in Ravensdale Road.

External communications:
Website
Some tidying up work has been done on the site and AH is continuing to do this.

Christmas Card
The card and inserts were designed by EL (with assistance from AY) who also arranged printing. 3,500 cards were delivered by volunteers from the congregation.

D&S Times
The Parish Secretary sends information using the D&S online system.

Style Guide
No progress has been made.

David V Smith, Chair of Communications 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. Several new members have joined this year and at some meetings, there have also been guest visitors. Membership now totals forty-four. Finances remain healthy due to the support from its members and the hard work of its committee of seven.

There has been an interesting and entertaining selection of talks. David Hastings represented the RNLI with his account entitled "Wooden Boats and Iron Men". Barbara Brown showed how exciting it can be on a barge on the waterways of Great Britain. Carol Dean touched emotions with her talk "Women Who changed the World". Jonathan Barker outlined his work representing the mentally ill. Anita Atkinson, local and national celebrity, brought along her royal memorabilia and recounted

her impressions and experience of the monarchy. Nicola Wells explained the work of Safe Families as a thank you for the donation received last year.

At the September meeting, there was a beautiful demonstration of flower arranging by member and florist Deborah Fields, along with florist Debbie Archer. The July Strawberry evening has remained extremely popular. Strawberries and cream were enjoyed as Andy Young and his choir performed a variety of songs from the world of musicals to popular music. In December, the annual Carol Service was just as well enhanced by Andy and his choir. It was followed by a convivial get-together with mince pies, mulled wine, a wine and chocolate raffle.

The annual outing (supported also by the local NCW), was a trip to Keswick for a boat trip around the Lake, followed by a cream tea.

The recent AGM celebrated the ongoing success of the group and was presided over by the Revd. Brian Holmes, after which he gave an entertaining talk on a pilgrimage to Mount Sinai. The Fellowship remain ever grateful to the support he offers.

As well as the social benefits which this group provides to the members, external agencies have benefitted. Donations have gone to the RNLI, Family Help, MIND and the homeless as well as our regular donation to USPG. In other ways there has been more practical involvement. Following the talk on the RNLI, jars were filled with 5ps and other donations. For the Church Garden Party, a mystery bottle stall was organised. This was a particularly profitable and popular activity. Donations for it, came from the Fellowship, but contributions were also gratefully received from members of the congregation. At Christmas the Women's Refuge once again received a huge variety of items.

Drawings have now been agreed for the Ladies' Fellowship celebratory banner. When ready, it will be displayed in the church and will celebrate the many years which this group has been running.

Ann Bell, Chairman & Secretary, All Saints and Salutation Ladies Fellowship

Men's Group

This group is very informal, there is no membership fee or attendance requirement. We provide opportunities to meet socially and visit places of interest. We try to provide a varied programme of events. In 2024 one highlight was our visit to the Broken Scar Water Treatment works, this year we hope to visit the Sewage Treatment works!

Kevin Winkworth, Secretary

Parish Lunch

It has been another successful year for our parish lunches which are usually held on the third Thursday of the month in the Enid Smith rooms. We regularly have at least forty people in attendance. Pre School kindly moved again at Christmas, to allow us the use of the main hall, enabling us to seat over fifty people.

I would like to thank all those 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.

Our ticket prices remain the same at £7.50 and they are available in advance.

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

Wednesday Afternoon Reading Group

After a long break, initially through Covid, we recommenced the reading group in September. With assistance from Kevin Winkworth, we decided to study the Gospel of Mark, using Tom Wright's guide 'Mark for Everyone'. We are now following the Lent course and intend to look at Stephen Cherry's book Unforgivable after Easter. Around ten of us meet on a fortnightly basis and would be happy to welcome anyone else who would like to join us in our discussions.

Susan Price

Circle Dancing

Venue: Salutation Hall
Monday afternoons
Time: 1:45 – 3:45 pm
Charge: £3

We are into our third 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 have made two subsequent donations this year. The last donation was of £200. As we do this the church, who generously support us by offering the hall to us for the rent that they do, are also benefitting and supporting the work of the hospice, as well as the physical and spiritual benefits of the dance.

2024 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. We offer fellowship and uplifting dance, and we make charitable donations and God is certainly blessing what we offer.

Mary Grimes

The Hand Bell Ringing Group

Report of the Hand Bell Ringing Group

"The bells were largely silent"

Following much discussion, the hand bell ringers decided to have a sabbatical at the end of 2024, so there was no ringing for charity in the run up to Christmas. The two main reasons for this were the lack of venues with suitable bell ringing space, and the prevalence of the use of card rather than cash in supermarkets. However, the group was invited to ring at AGE UK, and carols were enjoyed by clients and ringers alike. Although carol singing was organised at Abbeyfields, this was cancelled by the home, at short notice, as many residents were occupied elsewhere that afternoon.

The group agreed to continue with some practices during the year, as it was thought that some of the local care homes might be interested in their residents being entertained by the bells, and we were invited to return to AGE UK again in December 2025.

If we are to continue ringing, we do need more members. No previous experience is required, as we have made ringing easy. You do not have to be able to read music. 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 7p.m. to 9 p.m. in the Millennium Hall, during term time.

There are now between four and eight adult players who attend regularly and latterly we have also welcomed two teenagers who have accompanied their mums to some games. 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 £2.50 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. This year we have extended our welcome to anyone who might like to come

along for a cuppa and a chat (no stitching necessary) and generally just to enjoy fellowship in a warm welcoming environment. We continue to undertake individual projects and donate much of our work to local charities. We had a stall at the March coffee morning in the Millennium Hall and raised £90 for the church.
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.

Sue Elliott-Lyall

5.COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CHARITIES REPORTS

Community Outreach Committee

Our intention this year has been to reinforce the presence of All Saints' Church within the community, whilst working within the constraints caused by the current lack of a vicar.

The PCC supported a proposal to improve the altar lighting, as a constant symbol of the presence of the Church to the community – both those passing outside and those sitting in the foyer. With the aid of the Buildings and Grounds committee, this plan has been implemented.

We have offered, by way of the parish's contribution to the Government Warm Space initiative, a weekly afternoon of coffee and crafting. The hope is that we might develop this next winter to offer another regular afternoon, perhaps of board games or similar.

Some of you will recall taking part in a short course of Dementia awareness training, and we have been in touch with the team that offered this to set up refresher training, hopefully later this year.

In May, we will host a quiz in support of Christian Aid. Although the detail of this is being finalised, we hope to develop this as a deanery event with teams from a number of local parishes. We might make this an annual event if, and only if, a team from All Saints wins the event!

Jonathan Barker, Community Outreach Committee Chair

The Parish Magazine

A big thank you to all our contributors and the distribution team for their efforts. To Ben at our printers, Bench Hut Design and Print Ltd, for the support we enjoy from them, and to our loyal readership, without whom we could not continue. We hear recently that folk at Abbeyfield look forward to reading a copy. So, once you have read yours, please try to pass it to someone else to enjoy.

David Smith and I give particular thanks this year to Ellis Leatherbarrow, the longest serving member of our editorial team. Ellis was not that old when he was asked to become editor. On hearing this news, his parents exclaimed, "He is young. He's afraid. Let him rest. Heaven blessed." Thank you, Ellis, for your dedicated service to the magazine, you are part of the fabric!

Kevin Winkworth on behalf of the Editorial Team of Kevin Winkworth, David Smith and Ellis Leatherbarrow)

The Children's Society

The annual box collection raised a total of £551.17 last year. Thank you once again to all our box holders for their generosity. Last year the charity supported more than 72000 young people, helping those who face abuse, neglect and exploitation. They run 62 support services for young people and their families to provide early help and crisis support. Together with their partners and

supporters they have campaigned to secure government funding for early support hubs for young people to get vital help. We have 27 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 either 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 (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,
- Working families can access 15hrs free childcare for 2-year-olds since Sept 2024
- 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 good year for Preschool in terms of numbers of children however, we are still feeling the impact of the cost-of-living crisis which has now become the norm. Preschool endeavours to offset these increases through parental donations of resources for making play dough and various art and crafts resources which are gratefully received.
During the summer term, Preschool were successful in their application for a capital grant to create new toilet facilities for the children located off the main hall. This project was completed before the end of the year and has greatly benefitted the children who can now go independently to the toilets without having to be escorted out of the hall to use the ladies' facilities in the foyer. Preschool is extremely grateful to Colin Price who project managed the entire building of the toilets and delivered these facilities to a very high standard.
We are still seeing families waiting to become eligible for funding before taking a place at preschool or limiting their attendance, which is a sign of the cost of living impacting on families. However, we have benefitted from new funding for working parents of 2-year-olds which came into effect in September 2024, giving families 15hrs free childcare and education which helped to boost children's numbers.
In October 2024 the church and preschool combined to hold a coffee morning to raise money for trips and visits for the preschool children. It was a lovely morning and well attended. Our families told us it was a really lovely event and one which we hope to repeat. Thank you to everyone who helped on the day and special thanks goes to the kitchen helpers for their hard work and delicious scones and biscuits which went down a treat.
Finally, 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

(Hylda Hooper, Peter Davison and Pam Davison) who have greatly supported preschool over this year.

Amanda Summers, Preschool Manager

Tiny Tots

Yes! I know the name keeps changing. However, the Parent and Toddler Group is and will now continue to be called 'Tiny Tots'!

I am indebted to the volunteers that run this group, Caroline Brown who takes the lead on much of it, Sandra Hakin who has recently joined us as a DBS checked helper and Ruth who keeps us full of coffee and biscuits! Without their hard work, the group would not be able to continue to provide such a great service to the local community.

We are steadily updating and replacing equipment from our weekly fee. This is deliberately kept low, at £3 a family. Despite that, we have been able to contribute funds to the Millennium Trust, with the hope of raising around £1000 this year in lieu of hire charges.

Attendance is variable, between 5 and 20 children. It can get quite exciting but seems to work ok that way.

Andy Young

29th Darlington (All Saints' and Salutation) Rainbows

2024 was packed with laughter, fun and exciting activities for our rainbow group! We started the year with refreshing ourselves with our rainbow promise, the girls made their very own promise potion with sequins, glitter and paper to symbolise each aspect of the promise and remind them of it. The girls love anything that involves arts and craft, so this went down a treat with them. This also paired well with the recycling and helper theme award badge that we had chosen to work towards that term.

The rainbows enjoyed creating their very own rock pet during one session and it's fair to say we have some future artists within our group!

Just before Easter the rainbows channelled their inner Mary Berry and made their very own chocolate scotch egg. This consisted of a creme egg centre and a brownie and icing outer layer which was then rolled in colourful sprinkles! This was a success with the girls, they loved having the independence to make their own egg and of course eating it!

In the run up to summer, we decided to take part in the Olympic Challenge! The girls were very excited to not only earn a special badge but also have an opportunity to get out and take part in some sport activities. We had a mini-Olympics with the rainbows where they took part in team

games such as ring toss and a relay race. The girls also designed and decorated their own Olympic mascot after learning about the significance it holds. As part of the Olympic challenge our rainbows took part in the Darlington junior park run. It was wonderful to see the girls engage and also cheer on others. A few of the girls are now regularly part of the run!

At our last meeting before the start of the summer holidays our rainbows were lucky enough to be visited by Rapunzel at their very own princess party. The girls learnt princess etiquette before having their magical makeover! It was a wonderful way to end the term.

In September, the girls were working towards their 'having adventure' theme award and to help with this we took the rainbows on a nature scavenger hunt. We walked around Blackwell while keeping an eye out for the things on the scavenger hunt such as spiders' webs, feathers and green leaves. The girls enjoyed getting outdoors and this was a good opportunity to go over road safety with them too.

For the last few meetings before December, we did some globe-trotting with the rainbows where we 'visited' different countries over the meetings. Before travelling anywhere of course we needed passports, so the rainbows each made their favourite teddy their very own passport to get stamped along the way. We kickstarted our adventures with a trip to Italy where the girls made their own leaning tower of Pisa and decorated pizza. Next stop was Canada where the girls created their own paper plate Canadian flag before decorating their own maple syrup pancakes. Our final destination was Egypt, the girls learnt how to write their name in hieroglyphics and then made their own jelly tot pyramid!

To end the year, our rainbows performed a nativity for their parents and carers. They did an absolutely amazing job - given we only had 3 practice sessions before the real thing. At the end of the performance, each girl was awarded the badges they had earned over the past couple months. It is such a joy to see their reaction to receiving badges which they have worked hard for. We are very proud of each and every girl in our unit, they continue to amaze us week after week, and it is wonderful to watching them grow and flourish.

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

12th All Saints Brownies

Our Brownie Pack has had another busy year of challenges, outings and fun. We have had 8 new brownies, and one transferred from Leeds Division and 3 girls left to go up to Guides, we wish them well as they carry on their Guiding journey. The girls have had lots of fun completing many challenges in our Brownie Program and as such 5 Brownies have completed their Gold award and 7 Silver awards have been presented.

We have had two Brownie Holidays weekends away at Camp House Spennymoor, where we have lots of fun activities, crafts, games and meet new friends as we have joint weekends with the brownies from St Columba's. I can confirm the leaders enjoy the weekends as much if not more than

the brownies and we happily give our time to the planning, organising, completing the policies and procedures, shopping and of course the weekend.

The pack also had a day trip at Edinburgh Zoo with units from Elm Ridge Brownies and Guides, with a party of approximately 100 travelling by train. We had a lovely day even though the weather was not too good for us. We had been given a donation from the DBC Community Fund to spend on the Brownie & Guides at All Saints, so our share was used to pay for part of the cost of the trip to the Zoo.

We also took part in the Durham South Activity Day at East Shotton Camp Site. The week prior to that Saturday it had rained constantly so the decision to all wear wellies was a very sound one! The girls had a great day, and the sun shone, we did campfire cooking, compass making, map reading and the girls completed their Skills Builder Explore Stage 2 badge.

The year was rounded off with our Christmas party at the Church Hall for a games night as requested by the Brownies, followed on Sunday morning, when Darlington Stephenson Division took over one of the screenings of Moana at Vue, with the majority of our pack attending and the cinema full of Brownies and Guides.

A vast number of badges have been completed over the last year in all six sections, these include Skills Builders, Theme Awards and of course Interest Badges covering: - Aviation, Speaking Out, Collecting, Languages, Charities, Baking and Mindfulness to name a few.

Without the support of the leaders, we would not be able to give the girls these opportunities and I would like to thank Ali Skilbeck and Sophie Finch for giving their time and commitment to our Unit. Also, thanks go to Grace and Anya for volunteering at weekly meetings and outings.

We are looking forward to the year ahead as we already have two Brownie Holidays planned.

Anita Wilson, Brown Owl, 12th All Saints Brownies

29th Darlington Guides

Autumn term meetings at guides in 2023 included working on Ethel's Challenge badge looking at guiding traditions and skills from the past and new guides working on promise activities, designing new games, cops and robbers an outdoor game in the dark. We also looked at Diwali traditions and made Diwali lamps from old compact discs and paper flowers. Our Remembrance activity this year was from Ethel's Challenge badge looking at how Girl Guides contributed to WW2. Camp fire songs with smores and Christmas craft are a must every year and our last evening for 2023 was an outing for Pizza in town.

2024 started with the Guides working on the next skills building badge from our Network theme and continuing sections of Ethel's Challenge badge. We always celebrate Thinking Day on 22nd February when we celebrate guiding around the world and think of all our guiding friends. We made felt triangular bookmarks for Mother's Day, completed Easter Egg challenges concluding the term with a Promise ceremony for the new guides and badges awarded to all.

During the Spring/Summer term we held our own mini-Olympics for the guiding Olympic challenge badge, joining with the brownies which included creating our own mini events and making Olympic torches from recycling materials. We tie dyed T-shirts which were a great success and played outdoor games, along with outdoor cooking. One of our Leaders Becca was getting married in June, so we held a 'Hen Do' completing the mixology badge and making wedding dresses from recycling.

The last night of term the guides walked along Rockwell Pastures nature walk into town to finish at Kaspa's for Ice creams and waffles.

Louise Gibson, Unit Leader, 29th Darlington Guides

29th Salutation Brownies

29th Darlington Brownies have had another exciting year! As always, we have made some creative crafts, learnt new skills and enjoyed trying new foods. We enjoyed an 'I'm a Brownie, get me out of here!' themed pack holiday. We tried lots of exciting foods, completed bush-tucker trials, and had an amazing visit from Aquatic Finatic, who brought us different animals to see and pet. We had some interesting guests this year too, including Dr Tim, who came to teach us helpful first aid skills and author Ross Frazer, who completed a fantastic workshop with us.

We ventured away from Salutation Hall for a change, and enjoyed an evening at 'Create and Paint' where we painted our very own plates! We celebrated Burns night, Lunar New Year, Halloween, Pancake Day, Christmas and Bonfire night as well as enjoying a Gold Award party!

This year we have been working towards lots of badges, including Mindfulness, Innovate Stage 2 and First Aid. We're also now looking forward to our next Brownie Holiday in May.

We have had a fabulous year, and would like to thank our brilliant leaders Sophie, Abi, Rachel, Layna and young leader Sophie for all their time and effort to make Brownies amazing!

Jenny Groves, Brown Owl

Millennium Hall

As Hall Bookings Secretary, I took over the role in September 2024, and I'd like to begin by expressing my sincere thanks to Dee Wastnedge for her clear and well-organised handover. Her support made the transition into the role smooth and manageable.

Operational Updates

Although I received a detailed and helpful handover, there was an initial challenge in managing access to the Hall key for users. Thankfully this was swiftly resolved thanks to Colin Price, who kindly arranged for three key safes and a secure letterbox to be installed. These are now in regular use and have proven invaluable, not only for the Millennium Hall but also for Salutation Hall. This

improvement has streamlined the process for users collecting keys, particularly for one-off and out-of-hours bookings, eliminating the need for an extra trip solely for key collection.

While this development has made operations more efficient, I found that the reduced face-to-face interaction with bookers meant important information was sometimes missed. To address this, I've recently implemented a booking information sheet that is shared with users upon confirmation. This ensures they still receive all the key details I would previously have passed on in person. A feedback form has also just been launched to gather input from users after their bookings. This will be a valuable tool for identifying areas of improvement and understanding what works well for our hirers.

Website

Since November, I have been working closely with Andy Hopkins to update and improve our website. Each location now has its own dedicated webpage, and we've consolidated the process into a single, streamlined booking form. Nathan Barker has kindly contributed some new photographs, which will be added shortly to enhance the visual appeal of the site.

Booking Updates

From a financial and operational standpoint, bookings for the Millennium Hall have remained strong. We currently have five regular users who are invoiced monthly, with other users on a termly or bi-annual basis. Ad hoc party bookings have seen an increase compared to last year, averaging around four per month. These are typically booked for a minimum of three hours, generating approximately £75 per booking. We already have bookings confirmed as far ahead as July.

Salutation Hall has also experienced a surge in regular contract bookings and is now in use every weekday. The recent refurbishments have been warmly received, with several users offering lovely compliments about the space and facilities.

Final Thanks

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Colin Price for his continued support and guidance, and also to Pam and Peter Davison for their ongoing help. Their contributions play a vital part in the smooth running of the Halls.

Lauren Curry, 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 you must 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 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 2024 increased to £20,369 from £16,594 in 2023 and we have been able to improve our cash reserves slightly to £19,784. Managing our operating costs is a continual challenge particularly with the recent escalation in energy costs.

The principal project in the last year has been the provision of an infants' bathroom off the Millennium Hall. Such a facility avoids the pre-school children having to use the female bathroom and all the safeguarding concerns that flow from that. The project includes two cubicles with infant toilets, hand wash basins and a nappy changing table together with associated lighting, heating and ventilation. The work started during the summer holidays with the installation of the doorway and was completed during the autumn half term. Permission to carry out this project has been sought and received from the Millennium trustees, the Diocese and the National Lottery Community Fund (as successor to the Millennium Commission). The Millennium Centre is not subject to faculty jurisdiction. The total cost of the work was £31k supported by a Local Authority grant of £25k and £6k from Pre-School reserves.

Some improvements were made to the security of the Centre with new locks on the two external steel doors, the installation of a letter box and the addition of three key safes. Other tasks included servicing of the boilers, fire alarms and extinguishers plus cleaning the soft play area surface, repairs to the oven and the reversal of the kitchen door to improve access to the kitchen cupboards.

We are grateful to all those who have served as trustees over the past twelve months. We are particularly indebted to Dee Wastnedge, who acted as Bookings Secretary for much of the year, Pam Davison as Finance Director and Alison Barker as Company Secretary. This year Dee Wastnedge and Alison Mannion retired from the board of trustees after several years of valuable service. In November we were very pleased to welcome Lauren Curry as a trustee taking over the role as Hall Booking Secretary. Our thanks to David Curran and Phil Elliott-Lyall who, continue to support the maintenance of the buildings. Our thanks too, for his dedication and reliability as our cleaner, to Stephen Archer.

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 2025

6. WIDER CHURCH AND SYNOD REPORTS

Darlington Deanery Synod

The first meeting of the calendar year was hosted by the parish of All Saints, Blackwell. Mark East, the Area Dean, spoke about the need to re-visit the "Deanery Plan", which was launched in 2020, and in particular the importance of looking to the future. He was keen to emphasise the promotion of "God's Kingdom" throughout the deanery and hoped parishes could find some common ground to work more collaboratively. James Harvey then gave a report on the developments around St Cuthbert's becoming a resource church. In recent months they had established a Youth Gospel Choir, set up a new Youth Alpha Course and produced a regular newsletter.

In July, Synod members arrived at the parish church of St Michael's, Heighington. The Deanery Plan was again the main topic of discussion with planning for the "Deanery Away Day" scheduled for later in the year progressing well. The focus of the day was to formulate a strategy for growth across all the parishes in the deanery. Updates on current vacant positions, work being undertaken by the Tackling Poverty Enabling Group and details of the 2025 Parish Share timelines were then given to Synod members. Information on the "Christmas Journey" was also provided, and it was hoped over 1,000 children would attend this year.

The aforementioned "Deanery Away Day" was held at St Mary's Primary School in Cockerton on 12 October with a theme of "Flourishing Together". The event was well attended with the majority of parishes being represented. Following the opening welcome and worship, Ali Bianchi and Amy Burns from the Diocesan Office ran the first workshop (Growing Healthy Churches Together). This was followed by another workshop titled "Being Responsible Together" featuring presentations by Martin Howard and Beth Still covering Net Zero and Grant Opportunities. After lunch Andrew Maxwell spoke about Generous Giving, parish finances and legacies.

The final Synod meeting of the year took place at St Matthew's and St Luke's. Paul Child (Diocesan Giving Adviser) gave a detailed presentation on how parishes could increase their level of giving. Positive feedback had been received from those who attended the "Deanery Away Day" and a paper compiling the results of the day was to be produced in due course. Before the meeting closed a donation of £800 towards the "Christmas Journey" was made to St Matthew's PCC.

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 2024

	Unrestricted Funds 2024	Restricted Funds 2024	Total Funds 2024	Unrestricted Funds 2023	Restricted Funds 2023	Total Funds 2023
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM:	£	£	£	£	£	£
Donations and legacies	65,674	10,500	76,174	74,374	115	74,489
Charitable activities	5,727	102,177	107,904	6,395	48,257	54,652
Investments	39	112	151	25	70	95
Other trading activities	30,206	-	30,206	25,271	220	25,491
TOTAL INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS	101,646	112,789	214,435	106,065	48,662	154,727
EXPENDITURE ON:						
Raising funds	13,247	-	13,247	9,748	-	9,748
Charitable activities	100,489	98,266	198,755	105,791	52,881	158,672
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	113,736	98,266	212,002	115,539	52,881	168,420
NET INCOME / (EXPENDITURE)	(12,090)	14,523	2,433	(9,474)	(4,219)	(13,693)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:						
TOTAL FUNDS BROUGHT FORWARD	72,804	54,216	127,020	82,278	58,435	140,713
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	£ 60,714	68,739	129,453	£ 72,804	54,216	127,020

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF

ALL SAINTS' AND SALUTATION BLACKWELL, DARLINGTON

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
FIXED ASSETS		
Tangible assets	5,934	6,749
CURRENT ASSETS		
Bank accounts	129,565	125,568
Cash in hand	2,655	2,720
Debtors	14,055	13,057
Stocks	160	109
	146,435	141,454
LIABILITIES		
Creditors - amounts falling due within one year	(22,916)	(21,183)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	123,519	120,271
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	129,453	127,020
NET ASSETS	£ 129,453	£ 127,020
PARISH FUNDS		
Unrestricted	60,714	72,804
Restricted	68,739	54,216
TOTAL FUNDS	£ 129,453	£ 127,020

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF

ALL SAINTS' AND SALUTATION BLACKWELL, DARLINGTON

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM:

Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted Funds 2024	Restricted Funds 2024	Total Funds 2024	Unrestricted Funds 2023	Restricted Funds 2023	Total Funds 2023
Voluntary income	£	£	£	£	£	£
Planned giving:-						
Envelopes, covenants and Gift Aid	45,649	-	45,649	54,159	-	54,159
Tax reclaim	12,634	-	12,634	13,807	-	13,807
Collections (loose plate)	6,817	-	6,817	5,627	-	5,627
Special Charity collections	269	-	269	216	-	216
Donations and Legacies	305	10,500	10,805	565	115	680
	£ 65,674	10,500	76,174	£ 74,374	115	74,489
Income from charitable activities						
Church activities						
Occasional offices	5,727	-	5,727	6,395	-	6,395
All Saints Blackwell Pre-School	-	102,177	102,177	-	48,257	48,257
	£ 5,727	102,177	107,904	£ 6,395	48,257	54,652
Income from investments						
Interest receivable	39	112	151	25	70	95
Other trading activities						
Activities for generating funds						
Fundraising	23,936	-	23,936	18,910	220	19,130
Salutation Hall income	3,598	-	3,598	4,189	-	4,189
Sundry income	2,672	-	2,672	2,172	-	2,172
	£ 30,206	£ -	30,206	£ 25,271	£ 220	25,491
Total Income and Endowments	£ 101,646	£ 112,789	£ 214,435	£ 106,065	£ 48,662	£ 154,727

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF

ALL SAINTS' AND SALUTATION BLACKWELL, DARLINGTON

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

EXPENDITURE

Raising funds	Unrestricted Funds 2024	Restricted Funds 2024	Total 2024	Unrestricted Funds 2023	Restricted Funds 2023	Total 2023
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Fundraising	13,247	-	13,247	9,748	-	9,748
Charitable activities						
Church activites and expenses						
Charitable and Mission giving	3,856	-	3,856	1,396	-	1,396
Parish share	50,000	-	50,000	60,000	-	60,000
Clergy expenses	328	-	328	315	-	315
Church running expenses	15,244	-	15,244	10,776	-	10,776
Cost of services	3,111	-	3,111	3,267	-	3,267
Church maintenance	2,215	-	2,215	807	-	807
Insurance	1,038	-	1,038	968	-	968
Salutation Hall	3,913	-	3,913	3,118	-	3,118
Salaries, wages and honoraria	14,758	-	14,758	15,119	-	15,119
Sundry costs	769	4,086	4,855	5,588	-	5,588
Administration costs	2,942	-	2,942	2,978	-	2,978
Depreciation	815	-	815	159	-	159
Independent Examination	1,500	-	1,500	1,300	-	1,300
All Saints Blackwell Pre-School	-	94,180	94,180	-	52,881	52,881
	£ 100,489	£ 98,266	198,755	£ 105,791	£ 52,881	158,672
Total Expenditure	£ 113,736	98,266	212,002	£ 115,539	52,881	168,420

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF

ALL SAINTS' AND SALUTATION BLACKWELL, DARLINGTON

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

					2024	2023
FUNDRAISING	Income	Expenses	Total	Donations Paid Out	Surplus/ (Deficit)	Surplus/ (Deficit)
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Garden Party	2,741	(45)	2,696	-	2,696	2,070
Christmas Fair	4,757	(202)	4,555	-	4,555	3,788
Passover Meal	240	(165)	75	-	75	-
Music Festival	1,000	-	1,000	-	1,000	-
Parish Lunch Club	2,737	(3,154)	(417)	226	(643)	832
Magazine	1,524	(1,585)	(61)		(61)	(519)
Ladies Fellowship (excluding bank interest)	2,381	(2,219)	162	400	(238)	(109)
Tea and Coffee	732	(191)	541	-	541	603
Flower Fund	310	(458)	(148)	-	(148)	51
Social Committee	3,602	(1,917)	1,685	-	1,685	1,291
Badminton	220	(220)	-	-	-	-
100 Club	1,527	(1,228)	299	-	299	370
Bell Ringing	-	-	-	-	-	(9)
Circle Dancing	1,032	(780)	252	250	2	(12)
Tiny Tots	1,133	(1,083)	50	-	50	4
	£ 23,936	£ (13,247)	£ 10,689	£ 876	£ 9,813	£ 8,360

Summary

Income	23,936	18,910
Costs	(13,247)	(9,748)
	£ 10,689	£ 9,162

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF

ALL SAINTS' AND SALUTATION BLACKWELL, DARLINGTON

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

	2024		2023	
	£	£	£	£
CHARITABLE GIVING				
PCC : St. Teresa's Hospice		772		-
The Stroke Association		521		-
Children's Society		269		216
Dogs Trust Darlington		237		-
Alzheimers UK		209		51
RNLI		208		-
Lake District Search & Mountain Rescue Ass		208		-
Friends of Darlington Memorial Hospital		174		-
Cancer Research UK		132		51
Darlington Mind		125		-
Darlington Town Mission		125		-
North Park Care Home		-		155
Family Help Darlington		-		121
		2,980		594
Groups:				
Parish Lunch Club: Christian Aid	226		232	
Ladies Fellowship: USPG	200		100	
Ladies Fellowship: Safe Families	200		-	
Ladies Fellowship: King's Church Foodbank	-		100	
Circle Dancing: St. Teresa's Hospice	250		100	
Bell Ringers: King's Church Foodbank	-		270	
		876		802
		£ 3,856		£ 1,396