



# PARISH OF NORTH WEARSIDE

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To gather, together, to grow

Team Rector's Report 2023

Firstly a warm thank you to everyone who helps make this parish run (mostly) smoothly! Everyone from the team of willing washer-uppers and floor moppers at each event to the PCC and wardens (sometimes they are the same!!) This has been both a challenging but also fruitful year.

It is hard to imagine that this time last year we were still working out how to worship with Covid restrictions. We have continued to take Holy Communion with the priest dipping the wafer (some parishes have returned to the shared cup) and we are still cautious about sharing the peace, please let us know if you want that to change.

One huge highlight of the year was the **licensing of Paula Barber** as our Licensed Lay Minister (also known as a Reader) on 17th September at Chester-le-Street. It was a glorious day and wonderful to celebrate with her the end of some really hard academic work, a lot of juggling her day job and a full-on placement and also the continuation & affirmation of her ministry here among us. She has gained in confidence and ability during that time and is a real asset to our parish.

Nikki Main is roughly half way through her training also for Licenced Lay Ministry. She is diligent and organised (just like Paula) and is also a huge asset to our parish ministry. It is such a joy to see vocations develop and be authorised this way.

We have also been blessed with ministry from the **Home Communion Team** who have kept in touch with church family members who can no longer attend. Thank you all. Also our **Worship Team** have continued to enhance our worship, especially during Morning Praise services which have become a vital part of our worship pattern, enabling us to look to the future with confidence. Also we celebrated the certification of Sam Main who attended the Diocesan **Young Leaders** course this year. Well done to him and to the team who supported him and the other young people attending (also to his parents who taxied and encouraged).

**A variety of outreach activities** have continued. **Winter Warmer** attracts people who would never normally come to our church buildings and from that some very special relationships have continued to develop this year. An **Alpha Course** ran with help from Richard Mayland, the CAP debt centre manager, and that led the development of the **Friday Bible group** (it moved to Friday to make way for Winter Warmer). This continues to delight and inspire us all as we share learning together. Recently the Tuesday tea-time slot has been used for a **Lent group** and, going forward, the Explorers group. The Lent group on Sunday nights at St. Cuthbert's has

also been well attended and there have been opportunities for bible study and fellowship at the Thursday morning prayer. This attention to the bible is crucially important to our discipleship and I encourage you to join in. The **Bereavement Group** has been a safe space for people to find friendship and care and is greatly appreciated and gently but effectively led. **Prayer Hub** is an opportunity for some “freer” worship and some grappling with prayer for our parish, ourselves and the wider community. We have been known to boogie our praises, wave flags and play percussion instruments. It continues to be open for all who pass by and regulars. We also enjoyed the ministry of Allie of the **Ten2** team from the US who helped with missional aspects of parish life last summer. Many of these groups have benefited from the **Warm Spaces Funding** which enabled us to keep the heating on to welcome people in during this tricky economic time. Thank you to those who applied and administered this.

The **Toddler group** and **Cuddy Ducks** have continued to engage with children and their carers and enable developing relationships. Some of them attended the summer club which was a joy! There are now some budding new leaders and some very competent old ones! Thank you all for your commitment and grace.

Other things to note this last year are our participation in the commemoration of the death of HRH Queen Elizabeth. We were open and available for people to come and sign books of condolences. We participated once more in the Christmas hamper scheme called “**Gifts of Love**” which, despite the cost of living crisis, sent 12 hampers from each church to families who needed them, including to some of the CAP clients. **CAP** moved into the office upstairs at Holy Trinity and employed a further debt coach, Deborah, who works with Richard for 8 hours a week on Tuesdays. This work could multiply with further funding, there is such a need and clients have multiple and complex problems to solve.

I will leave the wardens to report on **buildings**, but I am immensely grateful for the perseverance and energy of each of them in making remedial work possible and leaving our buildings in a better state for the future. This has had an impact on our ability to fund the long-hoped-for toilets at Holy Trinity as we have used reserves to fund this and our Parish Share last year. The newly created **Finance Committee** are looking at ways to assess what we need to do and how we fund it for the future. Thank you to them for their wisdom and attention to detail.

**Schools** work continued with visits to schools to lead collective worship, visits to our churches and prayer spaces led by Wearside Youth For Christ. Thanks to all who have worked with Southwick Primary School, Northern Saints Academy (it became an academy at Christmas 2022) and Willow Woods Primary.

On a personal note, I have been **Mayor’s Chaplain** this year which has been real fun, praying before the first full year’s session in the new City Hall amongst other

events like hosting the Mayors service at St. Cuthberts. It has been a fruitful experience, Madam Mayor, Alison Smith has used her position to make some brilliant introductions to us including the other local councillors in Red House, the Friends of Bunny Hill and the Downhill Community Garden. All of whom are engaging with and helping at St. Cuthberts.

**Beacon Project** there is a separate report for this but I would like to say thank you to all the Team for your efforts. It didn't work out as we had hoped but lots has been learned and there is certainly fruit going forward. I wish Tony every blessing in his new job down in Hartlepool, your learning will be well used there.

### **Looking ahead:**

We have tried to rationalise meetings this year to enable better focus and communication. DCCs, finance, standing committees and PCCs are now set for the coming year. Do attend your DCC.

We now have a budget for the first year, thank you to the PCC and especially the Finance team for that. Do peruse and ask questions!

We look forward to a **blue plaque** being installed on Holy Trinity, hopefully some time in May once all the permissions are completed.

Finally my sabbatical begins on 15th May just after the **Celebration of our MUs 100th year!!** I will be checking out other churches as my study project to see their good practice. I'll go to Japan to visit my middle daughter Daisy and do plenty of walking and running, I hope. Thank you to clergy Davidson Chineduzim, Ruth Young, David Chadwick and also Archdeacon Bob Cooper who have all offered to cover services regularly and to the worship team for your continued support. The wardens and many others are stepping up and I am very grateful and not a little **proud of you all.**