**Annual Report and Accounts 2022**

**The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Barnard Castle with Whorlton**

**Diocese of Durham**

1. **Introduction**

This Report has been drawn up in accordance with the Charities Act 2011.

**2. Aims and purposes**

St. Mary’s Barnard Castle with Whorlton Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, The Revd Canon Alec Harding, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

**3. Objectives and activities:** We have discerned the parish’s overarching aim to be **Celebrating God’s Love**

**We seek to do this by:**

1. Working in partnership with those who bring life to the community.
2. Celebrating God’s gifts in His creation, His children and His work in this place.
3. Creating space, time and opportunities for people of all ages to grow in faith and worship.

**In 2022 we sought to focus on growing our Partnerships**

1. In the local Lunch Clubs
2. Through a Community Music Festival promoted by the parish
3. Seeking out Eco church partners/building on existing partnerships
4. Continuing contact with those who have registered an interest in the history of the town and church through the DigVentures Heritage project
5. Establishing a partnership with the Northern Dales Richard III Group to pursue the ‘Windows for the King’ project
6. Seeking to enable a Parish Nurse Scheme to take root in the Dale

**4. Achievements and performance**

4.1 **Growing partnerships:** our main aim for the year was identified at a church day held in the parish hall on March 12th. At this meeting participants agreed the new Dwelling in the Word passage for church reflection (Colossians 3.12-17). Members of the congregation reflected on the learning offered through the Partnership for Missional church process and spent time noticing developments both within and beyond the church.

The six aims (above) gave shape to the year but were possibly overambitious! That said:

Members of the congregation have (as individuals) offered to support the local lunch clubs (1) and by the end of the year a new charity (Durham Dales Parish Nursing) had come into existence (6). The purpose of the Charity (established with the help of Communities Together Durham and with Trustees from our own parish) is to offer professional nursing support across Teesdale and Weardale particularly geared towards the needs of those struggling with mental health issues, loneliness and isolation – an issue identified through the Partnership for Missional Church process.

A small working group created a hugely successful Community Festival (2) under the parish’s auspices. The Festival involved musicians of all ages and music of all kinds being performed across a number of venues. Musicians ranged from Primary and Secondary School children through to seasoned Brass Band performers, recitalists and choirs. The first performance of Kim Harding and Annette Lowson’s musical about the life of Richard III was held at Green Lane School and then attended by Richard III himself in church (courtesy of a ‘Time will Tell’ performer). Financial support was won from local councillors and a number of charities: this assisted greatly with venue hire and publicity and enabled some remuneration to be offered to workshop leaders and performers. Our thanks go to Clare Trevett and Annette Lowson in particular.

The Eco church group (3) won the Bronze Eco Church award from the Arocha organization: a plaque is now displayed in Barnard Castle church porch. The group supported and enabled acts of worship that highlighted the church’s care for creation: a Blessing of the waters service led the congregation to the Green Bridge where prayers were said for all connected by the River Tees; bug boxes/hotels were made and placed in the churchyard at a 4.00pm service and (for the first time) an event was held at Brightwoods (Deepdale) with open air worship set alongside opportunities to learn abut the flora and fauna of the area.

Heritage contacts (4): this aim is only just becoming possible as (through the church communications team) digital communication through regular e-newsletters has been promoted..

A formal partnership was entered into by the PCC with the Northern Dales Richard III Group (5) to promote and fundraise for the installation of 7 etched glass windows above the inner porch doors at Barnard Castle. These will mark Richard III’s investment towards creating a collegiate foundation at the church. The Partnership group (drawn from the Northern Dales Group and PCC nominated members) have sought expressions of interest for the work, shortlisted and interviewed applicants and identified Rachel Phillips as the preferred artist for the project. Fundraising has begun towards an anticipated £30-40,000 total.

**4.2 Worship and prayer**

i. Regular worship has resumed following the worst of the pandemic with service times finally settling into a monthly and weekly pattern across the parish. Holy Communion was offered in both kinds with individuals encouraged to use their own discretion over receiving the cup. Morning prayer on zoom on a Wednesday morning continued till the summer but came to an end in August.

Worshipping community: There are approximately 365 (349 in 2021) people (all ages) in the worshipping community. The increase reflects the wider ‘reach’ of the congregation through the community choir and orchestra.

1. Occasional Offices: Baptisms: The year seemed to be a year of baptisms with 40 candidates at Barnard Castle. The higher-than-normal number reflects (in part) vacancies in neighbouring parishes and the movement of young people (formerly of Barnard Castle) into new housing in Startforth.
2. Barnard Castle hosted the deanery confirmation service with 3 children and 3 adults being confirmed by the Bishop of Jarrow.
3. Three candidates were presented for Admission to communion in the Autumn term with a service taking place at Green Lane school.
4. Weddings: there were nine weddings at Barnard Castle – a slightly higher number than ‘normal’ but possibly a reflection of pent-up demand post covid.
5. Funerals: There were a total of 38 services: 25 services in church and 13 at crematoria. In addition, clergy conducted 8 services in neighbouring parishes during clergy vacancies. It is noticeable that the practice of ‘Direct Cremation’ – where no ceremony of any kind takes place, is increasing. The Vicar wrote to the local press highlighting the difficulties this can leave for those deprived of an opportunity to mourn.

**4.3 Mission and outreach**

1. **Music** **outreach:** (see the Community Music Festival above) Work through music continues to flourish under the direction of Annette Lowson with both the Community Choir and Orchestra increasing in numbers. Musicians have supported festival services at Barnard Castle and the Praise Band helped lead worship on a number of occasions. The Richard III musical (rehearsed across many weeks in school with Year 5 children from Green Lane) and regular hymn practice and school choir rehearsals offered new experiences to young musicians, increased their confidence and enabled them to perform to audiences for the first time following the pandemic.
2. **Schools**: Work in schools (particularly at Green Lane CE) has continued with the restoration of Godly Play sessions (Big Story), alongside regular collective worship, service offered by School Governors and church volunteers working in classes. Of particular note is Green Lane CE school governor’s decision to investigate joining the Diocesan Academy. Subject to due diligence, this process may see the school move out of Local Authority control in 2023 and an even greater alignment with the national Church’s vision for Education.

The vacancy for a Chaplain at Barnard Castle School remains unfilled. Parish clergy have sought to offer support to the school around Festivals.

1. **Under 5s:** A broader team was recruited to support the work of Smuffies with team members assisting with setting up the activities, offering refreshments and helping with crafts
2. **Families:** the number of families seeking baptisms remains high but it is increasingly difficult to maintain contact with them.
3. **Eco Church: (see above)**
4. **Care Homes**: Ministry in all but one of the Care Homes has recommenced with services being shared by ministers from the Church of England, Methodist and Roman Catholic churches.
5. **The Parish Share** offered to the diocese in 2022 was £68,291
6. **Donations to the FoodBank** are received in the church porch at Barnard Castle. The ‘cost of living crisis’ has greatly increased the need for donations with families who might once have donated to the FoodBank now needing extra support themselves. Provision of sanitary products in church helps to address **Period Poverty.**
7. **Warm Spaces:** Dramatic increases in the price of fuel prompted by the war in Ukraine led to the introduction of Warm Spaces in community buildings. A number of members from the congregation offered to host a ‘Warm Space’ in the Parish Hall but more suitable (and more comfortable) provision has been offered in the town, so it was decided not to join this scheme.
   1. **Developing discipleship**

i. The parish has continued to offer opportunities for study and prayer through

* 1. A course using material provided by USPG: Living Stones, Living Hope
  2. A home-produced course looking to the words and symbols used in Anglican services
  3. A Lent course based on the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent Book, Embracing Justice by Isabelle Hamley.

ii. Stewardship: a Stewardship appeal was made in the Autumn inviting new givers to support the parishes’ finances through the Parish Giving Scheme and seeking ‘one off’ donations from visitors. The appeal highlighted new digital means of giving as the move towards a cashless society accelerates.

**4.5 Pastoral Care**

Through its activities and social events the PCC seeks to create and support healthy relationships through which individuals can flourish both within and beyond the church.

1. Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults: Harriet Hargreaves was appointed to the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO). Safeguarding features on all PCC agendas. Safeguarding Training and DBS certificates are kept up to date: the monitoring of this will be made considerably easier through a nationally introduced online dashboard for PSO’s.
2. ‘Health and Safety’ is a regular item on PCC agendas providing an opportunity to consider health and safety issues which may need attention.
3. Communication:
   1. The Pilgrim magazine: after many years serving as a means of communication in the parish the Pilgrim Magazine was finally retired in favour of digital means of communication. A single sheet parish newsletter will provide basic information for those unable to access online information through the church website, FaceBook or a newly created e-letter. Thanks are particularly offered to Geoff Lowson who has edited the magazine over the last few years and John Elliot who has proof read each edition.
   2. The Church website offers a window into parish life.
   3. A new church guidebook ‘A journey through time’ by Geoff Knott was written and published and is now available at Barnard Castle
4. Barnard Castle church was able to host its All Souls’ service and invite the recently bereaved to attend.
5. The offer of the Ministry of Healing once a month recommenced at Barnard Castle with the opportunity for ‘the laying on of hands and anointing with oil’ being appreciated by members of the congregation.
6. The Civic Remembrance service took place in church at Barnard Castle. Services were also held in town on Merchant Navy Day and Aviation Day.
7. A display of congregation members’ connections with the worldwide church was erected at Barnard Castle. A world church service was led by Revd Geoff Lowson at the end of November.
   1. **Social Events**
8. Music making:
   1. The community choir and musicians performed at Blanchland at a Christmas event organized by the Lord Crewe Trust and were also welcomed in Romaldkirk and at Barnard Castle Methodist Church. Performances also took place as part of the Community Music Festival with a sell out performance by the orchestra at The Witham, and full churches for choir events in the summer and at Christmas time.
   2. Musicians accompanied Carols on the Green at Whorlton on Christmas Eve and toured the local Care Homes for Carol singing.
9. The Friends of St Mary’s continue to support the work of Barnard Castle Parish Church with donations but offered their planned Rock and Roll fundraiser for the appeal for Ukraine. A performance from the Castle Players’ winter tour was held under FOSMs auspices.
10. Barnard Castle Parish Church hosted the bi-annual Richard III conference and provided a venue for the Barnard Castle School Choral Society performance of Faure’s Requiem.
11. A ‘Sleep Out’ for Ukraine was held in the church carpark following the Russian invasion of that country. Prayers for Ukraine attracted a significant congregation and refugees have arrived in Teesdale (and in our congregation).
12. **The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee:** the Jubilee was marked with special prayers and a celebratory service and lunch in church at Barnard Castle.
13. **The death of the Queen and the accession of the King.** Services were held at both churches to mark the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Books of condolence were opened and the churches were available for prayer and reflection across the period of mourning. The Proclamation of the new King took place outside Barnard Castle church, led by the Mayor, accompanied by the Vicar and other Christian ministers and supported by parish musicians.
14. **Christmas Crib exhibition:** a delightful exhibition of over 40 crib sets was held in the middle of December at Barnard Castle
15. **Bell Ringing:** The Bell ringers rang to mark the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee, the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the accession of King Charles. The tower also hosted visitors on Heritage Open Day.
16. **Other:** Bacon butties proved popular between services on 2 Sundays in the year!

**5. The wider church and ministry**

1. **Staff:** 
   1. the parish continues to enjoy the ministry of Revd Sarah Cliff as assistant curate: in 2023 Sarah will take up an appointment as Vicar of St John the Divine, Sandylands (Blackburn Diocese).
   2. Mrs Gillian Lunn (ordinand) finished her training at Cranmer Hall in the summer bidding the parish goodbye at the end of April. She is now serving her title in Leyburn having been ordained deacon at Wakefield Cathedral on 2nd July 2022.
   3. The church caretaker (Mr Stephen Guy) resigned from his post to move into full time employment elsewhere.
2. **Churches Together:** Lent and Advent Lunches were organised in support of Christian Aid, as was the annual Christian Aid collection. The World Day of Prayer service was co-ordinated by Gillian Lunn and held at Barnard Castle.
3. **Deanery**: The parish may appoint three lay members to Deanery Synod.
   1. A Deanery Pilgrimage was co-ordinated by parishioners from Gainford and Winston and led (over two days) from Barnard Castle to Whorlton and then from Whorlton to Gainford. An accompanying ‘virtual pilgrimage’ was filmed and made available online for those unable to take part physically. The event was scheduled for the Patronal weekend, itself greatly affected by the death of the Monarch.
   2. Revd Eileen Harrop was appointed to serve Staindrop and Ingleton parishes alongside her current position as Vicar of Gainford and Winston.
   3. The Deanery ran a stall at the Eggleston show alongside friends from the Methodist Circuit

**6. Wardens’ Report**

**Barnard Castle.**

The statutory Electrical Inspection of the church was undertaken and a report and recommendations received to be followed up.

Robert Stenlake has continued to liaise, on behalf of the PCC, with John Barnes (the church architect) and stained-glass experts (Jonathan and Ruth Cooke) to identify urgent works required by the church QI report and to investigate means of funding these works. The exceptionally hot summer caused damage to the Richardson and the Dugard windows on the south side of the church (lead fixings perishing) making attention to these an increased priority alongside work on the stonework surrounding the east window in the south transept and around the chancel area.

**Barnard Castle Parish Hall**

The Parish Hall is in the care of the Parish Hall Association under a lease from the PCC.

The committee have purchased replacement tables for the Hall and commissioned the 5 yearly Electrical test. In the course of the year Mr Stephen Guy stepped down from his role as Hall Caretaker. The committee appointed Mr Stephen Rusling to the role at the end of the year.

**Church Car Park:** Problems caused by the abuse of the church carpark by local residence have eased to the relief of all.

**Amen Corner:** Formal ownership of the Carpark has been received from the Land Registry as has recognition that the church is the owner of the rose garden on the corner of Amen Corner. Documents concerning these assets are on file in the church safe.

**Whorlton**

1. **Whorlton church:**

The main problem identified in the Q.I. 2021 was water ingress from an unsuitable down pipe and a gaping mortar joint at the east end of the church. The drainage pipe was replaced and the joint in the stonework repointed with lime mortar. This problem though solved, left inside floor and walls being very damp. This problem has been largely solved by allowing as much ventilation and drying out throughout the summer of 2022. Lead flashing associated with the porch roof was repaired but such repairs may only be of a temporary nature though for the time being seem effective.

In 2022 various other work was achieved, namely, re-wiring the bell louvres to prevent bird nesting, oiling and lubrication of the main door and vestry door and the restoration of mosaic panels against the East end. Decoration of the stonework behind the Altar together with cleaning and restoring Chancel floor tiles took place. A faulty outside light was replaced and all Nave chandelier bulbs were replaced with more energy efficient bulbs. A 2021 Electrical report highlighted a missing Earth Rod cover and a faulty electrical switch board. These two problems have now been rectified. The Q.I. commented on missing protective wire window screens on certain windows but professional advice suggested that, owing to the location and cost involved, they shouldn’t be renewed.

Much has been achieved since the Q.I. but more needs to be done. Namely, the soak away at the East end is blocked, vestry floor tiles need cleaning and restoring and flashing around the steeple and porch need regular clearing of debris blown from nearby trees.

**Whorlton Churchyard:** Durham County Council have responsibility for the churchyard and have carried out repairs to the Lychgate and several graves. We have been assured that surrounding trees and shrubs will be pruned where necessary though this has yet to happen.

**Whorlton Village Hall:** The Village Hall is in the care of the Village Hall Association under a lease from the PCC. The association have made various changes and improvements to the building whilst gaining Church permission beforehand!

**8. Structure, government and management**

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio, elected or co-opted by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting [APCM], in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. At its Annual Meeting in 2020 a motion was passed that came into effect in 2021:

1. Churchwardens be eligible to serve up to six consecutive years (this provision to be reviewed every six years as per the Church Representation Rules).
2. The balance between elected/ex officio members of the PCC be changed through
3. removing the automatic membership of Readers to the PCC
4. replacing the existing ‘rolling election of PCC members’ with the election of 8 lay representatives (who for the purposes of continuity can serve up to 4 consecutive years).

As Charity Trustees PCC members are mindful of the Charity Commission’s Guidance on public benefit and,in particular, the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. There were 17 members of the PCC

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting was held after morning worship at Barnard Castle at the end of April 2022. The Electoral Roll was reported to stand at 135. From the APCM the following served as members of the PCC:

Incumbent & Chairman Rev. Alec Harding

Rev. Sarah Cliff

Churchwardens

Mrs Joan Kemp Ambler (elected 2020)

Mr Roy Long (elected 2020)

Mr Allan Jones (elected 2021)

Mr Astley Fenwick (elected 2021)

Diocesan Synod Mrs Frances Stenlake (and Lay Chair of the PCC)

Deanery Synod 3 x vacancies

PCC Secretary Mrs Carolyn Knott

PCC Treasurer Mr Ian Groves (co-opted)

Elected Members (up to 8 places)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| John White  John Emerson  Helen Goodman | Geoff Knott  Carolyn Knott  Liz Burdon | John Lloyd (resigned December 2022)  Kate Stewart (co-opted May 2022) |

The full PCC met 9 times in the year January to December 2022 with an average attendance of 75% The PCC operated through a number of committees, which met from time to time between full PCC meetings and reported back at the PCC. These were:

**8.1 Standing Committee**: This is the only committee required by law. It has power to transact the business of the PCC meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council (e.g. authorise payments beyond those set in the PCC's budget.) The Standing Committee includes the Vicar, 2 church wardens and 2 elected lay representatives to accord with the Church representation rules.

8.2 Teams: the PCC oversees and receives reports from a number of teams: Finance, Communication, Eco-Church, Fundraising and Social (FunSoc), Whorlton Church, Heritage, Children and young people.