

Annual Report and Accounts 2023

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.

Our priorities in 2023 were discerned to be:

1. **Growing our work with Children and young people** and connecting church, schools and families together:
2. **Healing and wholeness**
3. **Offering 'Living water' through our worship and common life so we might grow**

Communication:

We communicate our activity through an e-letter and/or a hard copy newsletter, through the church pew sheet, through the church website and through FaceBook.

Achievements and performance

1. Growing our work with children and young people:

The parish continues to work extensively with children and young people with volunteers involved in the weekly under-fives group (Smuffies), offering Junior church provision at Barnard Castle, weekly Big Story sessions, hymn practice and church school choir sessions and (occasional) Prayer spaces at Green Lane School. The Vicar conducts weekly collective worship at Montalbo and Green Lane Schools and now has a regular pattern of involvement at Barnard Castle School and the Prep school. Barnard Castle church hosts school visits and termly school services.

Uniformed organizations visit Barnard Castle Church.

However: we continue to struggle to connect those who come for baptism into the life of the church and to give a sense of direction to the considerable amount of work that is being done with Primary School children.

What have we done? In May we hosted the Deanery Synod open meeting for those involved in children's and young peoples' work with the intention of sharing good practice and creating the foundations for a Mission Hub supported by Diocesan Transformation Funds. Unfortunately, the national church bodies have delayed the release of these monies to the diocese and this route seems closed to us.

In November, those interested from the parish met with Scripture Union's rep (Ian Kent) to discuss possible ways forward. The group recognized that the 4.00pm service's link with baptism families had been broken through Covid and had not been successful in drawing these families into worship: the 4.00pm service will be dropped from the service pattern. Advice received was to build on existing work but 'how' is still elusive.

Foundation Governors at Green Lane CE School have helped the school to make the transition into the Durham and Newcastle diocesan learning Trust academy: a major shift that further solidifies the school's connection to the church and the Christian faith.

2. Healing and wholeness

Healing and wholeness sits within the church's provision of pastoral care to the town. At its widest level this includes ensuring that the parish safeguarding procedures are robust; supporting people to meet together and find strength and fellowship in community through the many groups that use the Parish Hall; promoting church social activities and events; hosting concerts and continuing to offer care home services and pastoral visits (not least those surrounding the occasional offices of baptisms, weddings and funerals).

What have we done?

<p>Social events this year have included a quiz night, the Castle Players' production of Treasure Island (promoted by the Friends of St Mary's), concerts by the Choral Society, Barnard Castle Band, the Phoenix Consort and Opera Nova. The Windows for the King project (supported by the PCC alongside the Northern Dales Richard III Group) has also fundraised through a pie and pea supper, a lecture in church, a garden party art display and a concert by Los Capitanes. At Whorlton, the popular Hymns and Pimms service was supported by the church choir and a concert of spirituals by The New Orleans Preservation Jazz Band attracted an audience from further afield. The Harvest service and Supper raised funds for USPG, the Christmas Eve carol singing (in church because of inclement weather) was much appreciated.</p>	<p>The church's ministry through music enabled almost a hundred people to meet together either in the Community Choir or as part of the Orchestra. The social and health benefits offered by these groups are part of the church's ministry. Performances have included a concert at the Roman Catholic Church; two events at The Witham Hall, Harvest and Christmas celebrations, a joint choirs' concert in church (with No Added Sugar) and involvement in the church Carol service.</p> <p>The church bellringers have also seen an increase in activity with new members learning how to handle the ropes and visiting teams from Richmond, the Durham and Newcastle group, Penrith and Scarborough.</p>
---	---

Safeguarding: The Parish Safeguarding Officer has met twice with the PCC to assist in the completion of the safeguarding dashboard and to ensure that safeguarding processes are up to date.

In addition:

- We have made sure that there are regular opportunities for the ministry of healing in the church calendar.
- Trustees of the Parish Nursing project have interviewed and appointed two Parish Nurses to work in Teesdale and Weardale. The first (Gladys Mugambi) was commissioned at a service at Barnard Castle
- A special service was held to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the NHS.
- At St Luke's tide a Celebration of healing and wholeness took place during morning worship.
- The regular All Souls' service welcomed those recently bereaved.

3. Offering 'Living Water' through our worship and common life so we might grow:

We always seek to offer the very best we can in our worship involving the gifts of as many people as possible and being true both to ourselves and our inheritance of faith through the celebration of the Liturgical Year, and the use of a liturgical approach to worship. Whilst we are not growing as a church in number we continue to welcome new members to the congregation.

What have we done?

<p>This year we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seen the Praise Band grow in number. (The ending of the 4.00pm Celebrate service will see the Praise Band incorporated into morning worship as 'Celebrate' takes a new form every 8 weeks or so in 2024).• Welcomed members of the congregation to swell the church choir on occasions.• Encouraged three members of the Parish to join the Wings for Worship course. (Joan Kemp Ambler, Frances Stenlake and Ian Blake are now taking their first steps in leading worship (Morning Praise/Celebrate) in Barnard Castle)• Added new names to both the readers and intercessors rotas• Found new ministrants of the chalice to join the rota	<p>In addition to special services connected to healing and wholeness the parish celebrated the Coronation of King Charles III and a World Church service was celebrated at St Andrew's-tide. An Eco event focused on bio-diversity and sustainability was held in June.</p> <p>We have also offered opportunities for study/discipleship through a number of courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploring God's Mercy (by Steven Croft) took place over Zoom• A Lent course from Church Action on Poverty was followed• A short series on the Book of Ruth was offered and• The Bible Course (an introduction to the sweep of the scriptures) was held in Barnard Castle church throughout the Autumn – this was particularly popular with 18-20 people attending each week.
---	---

Church Officers and Staff:

- Revd Sarah Cliff was appointed as Priest in charge of St John the Divine, Sandylands (Blackburn Diocese). A celebration of her ministry as curate in the parish took place at the beginning of March and a coachload of parishioners attended her Licensing by the Bishop of Lancaster.
- Revd John Moore stepped down from public ministry on his 90th birthday. Thanks and appreciation were expressed to both John and Doreen for their work in the parish as parishioners enjoyed a commemorative cake.
- Mrs Frances Stenlake was made an Honorary Canon of Durham Cathedral in recognition of her work in the parish and across the diocese.
- Dr Ana Moskvina will join the parish in summer 2024 as Assistant Curate. Ana is currently training at Cranmer Hall. Her doctorate is on Anglo Saxon Pilgrimage in the North East of England. Prior to being accepted for training she worked for Norwich Diocese.
- Mr Ian Groves stepped back from his role as Parish Treasurer due to ill health having offered his services from All Saints Blackwell.
- The PCC began discussions to secure the financial sustainability of the parish's music making and to support the ongoing work in the church school. As part of these discussions the Director of Music's contract is being updated and reviewed.

The wider church:

- a. **Barnard Castle Deanery.** This year:
 - The Cathedral Choir began a series of visits to Deaneries by singing Evensong at St Paul's Evenwood which was well attended
 - The deanery confirmation service was held at Staindrop church with +Paul as the confirming bishop.
 - The deanery had a stall at the Eggleston Show
 - Consultation began over whether to merge the Upper Weardale Parishes into Barnard Castle Deanery

- There is the possibility that Barnard Castle become part of the Northern Trails network that supports and promotes pilgrimage: the new Windows for the King provide a focus for visitors for this.
- A new Dean of Durham was appointed: Revd Dr Philip Plyming (formerly warden of Cranmer Hall)

b. Churches Together

- The Week of prayer for Christian Unity service took place at Barnard Castle church
- The World Day of Prayer service took place at Barnard Castle Methodist Church
- Members of the different churches held Lent and Advent lunches in support of Christian Aid

The Bishop of Durham announced his retirement at the end of February 2024.

Wardens' reports

St Mary's Barnard Castle

Suggested works arising from the Electrical report of 2022 were carried out. Astley Fenwick is investigating replacement fittings for the uprighters on the pillars of the church, some of which have failed.

Robert Stenlake continued work to raise funds for repairs to the 'Dugard' window in the south transept and work on the western most window of the south aisle. A faculty for this work has been obtained. Funds are now in place and work will be carried out in August 2024.

The PCC have looked ahead to the next stage of major works (namely the repair of the east window in the south transept and major repointing around the chancel). The window was installed at the time of Richard III and is decorated by his boar emblem carved in stone. After consultation with the DAC and Heritage England the PCC are of the opinion that this stone should be brought into the church before it loses all definition. Currently funds are not in place for this project and the availability of grant aid is limited: a point raised with Canon Adrian Daffern (Major Churches lead) when he visited in November.

The Windows for the King project to see etched and coloured glass windows placed above the porch doors at the entrance to the church nave was granted faculty permission. Funds have been raised by the Northern Dales Richard III Group and managed by the PCC. Rachel Philip's design was placed on display for comment as part of the Faculty process. The windows will be installed in September 2024: the 550th anniversary of Richard III becoming Lord of Barnard Castle.

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 refurbished some of the old chairs in the hall and protected the solar panels on the hall roof against invasive pigeons (!). Attempts to replace the water goods around the hall and to repair the hall soffits had to be abandoned when asbestos was found in the sarkin of the roof. Plans for a total refurbishment of the Guild Room have been drawn up and presented to the PCC for approval. Detailed costs are being sought to enable grant applications for work to be made.

St. Mary's Whorlton

The year began with the church having a new central heating clock fitted, a new wall heater and a protective cover for the earth rod installed.

All the usual necessary work was carried out: doors and locks cleaned and oiled, gutters cleaned, belfry wired against bird ingress, Fire Extinguishers serviced, as well as the Organ serviced and tuned. It is hoped an Organ condition report will be forthcoming from Lightbown and Son to highlight the extent of rodent damage. Bait has since been laid and the problem is now hopefully resolved.

There are no set times for church cleaning as it is carried out continually, likewise with the churchyard trees and shrubs: efforts by volunteers throughout the year have seen significant improvements.

Whorlton Village Hall:

The Village Hall is in the care of the Village Hall Association under a lease from the PCC. The association continue to make changes and improvements to the building.

Some numbers

<p>Baptisms 33 baptisms were conducted at Barnard Castle, 2 at Whorlton</p> <p>Weddings Three weddings were celebrated at Barnard Castle, one at Whorlton</p> <p>Funerals There were 14 funerals at Barnard Castle and 4 at Whorlton with a further 11 conducted at the crematoria alone.</p> <p>Clergy conducted 3 funerals in neighbouring parishes</p>	<p>Admission to communion Just one candidate was admitted to communion at a service at Green Lane School</p> <p>Confirmation Three children and three adults were prepared for confirmation</p> <p>Usual Sunday attendance</p> <p>Based on the 'October count' the usual Sunday attendance at Barnard Castle is 84 adults and 5 children.</p> <p>At Whorlton the figure is 10 adults</p>
<p>Christmas</p> <p>At Barnard Castle 611 people attended services on Christmas Day or Christmas Eve (133 communicants). Christingle attracted 159 people and the church carol service 152. In addition, two schools (approx. 400 children, 100 adults) and the Durham WI (250 adults) held their Carol services at church.</p> <p>The Carol singing and Christmas communion service at Whorlton was attended by 50 people (25 communicants)</p>	<p>The Worshipping community</p> <p>Those who attend 'regularly' in church, care homes, but excluding weekly Collective worship at two Primary Schools and occasional services at Barnard Castle School</p> <p>At Barnard Castle 324: (111 under 10; 13 aged 10-17; 162 aged 18-69, 138 over 70)</p> <p>17 adults joined the community, 25 left (moved away or died). 6 children moved away.</p> <p>The worshipping community at Whorlton is 14: 1 aged 11-17) 4 aged 18-69; 9 over 70</p>
<p>Easter</p> <p>At Barnard Castle 132 adults attended Easter worship (118 communicants).</p> <p>At Whorlton 10 adults attended Easter worship (9 communicants)</p>	<p>Comment</p> <p>The number of baptisms continues to reflect the shortage of clergy in neighbouring parishes.</p> <p>The Worshipping community number has been affected by the return to regular services at The Beaconsfield Care Home.</p>

Structure, governance 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:

- a. Churchwardens be eligible to serve up to six consecutive years (this provision to be reviewed every six years as per the Church Representation Rules).
- b. The balance between elected/ex officio members of the PCC be changed through
 - i. removing the automatic membership of Readers to the PCC
 - ii. 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.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting was held after morning worship at Barnard Castle on Monday 24th April 2023. The Electoral Roll was reported to stand at 144. From the APCM there were 15 members of the PCC:

Members of the PCC: PCC Standing Committee elected 24.4.23 are marked *

Incumbent & Chair Revd Alec Harding*

Churchwardens (Can serve 6 consecutive years)	Mrs Joan Kemp Ambler (elected 2020)	Mr Roy Long*(elected 2020)
	Vacancy	Vacancy

Ex Officio: Mrs Frances Stenlake* (Diocesan Synod) Lay Chair of PCC

Deanery Synod: Mr Keith Miles Ms Abi Littlefair Mr Astley Fenwick

(Three elected places to serve for 3 years from 2023)

Elected Members (8 places – can serve 4 consecutive years)

John White (2020) Seonaid Walker-Jones (2023)	Geoff Knott (2021) Helen Goodman* (2021)	Carolyn Knott (2021) Kate Stewart (2022) Liz Burdon (2022)	Catherine Wilkinson (co- opted 2023)
---	---	--	--

PCC Secretary

Mrs Carolyn Knott (Geoff Knott from April 2023)

PCC Treasurer

Mrs Frances Stenlake