



St Michael & All Angels
Houghton-le-Spring

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING 2022

Sunday 15th May
11.15 am



St Michael & All Angels Parish Church, Houghton-le-Spring
Meeting of Parishioners and Annual Parochial Church Meeting
Sunday 15th May 2022

AGENDA

MEETING OF PARISHIONERS:

1. **Prayers**
2. **Apologies** for Absence
3. **Minutes** of meeting held on Sunday 16th May 2021
4. **Election** of Church Wardens

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING:

1. **Minutes** of Meeting held on Sunday 16th May 2021 and matters arising.
2. **Notification** of any other items of business
3. **Electoral Roll Report and Parish Statistics**
4. **Rector's Report**
5. **Presentation of Annual Report for 2021**
 - Annual Accounts, Treasurer's Reports, Independent Examiner's Report
 - Church Wardens' Reports and Fabric Reports
 - Deanery Synod Report
 - PCC Secretary's Report
 - Safeguarding Report
 - Reports from the Church Affiliated Organisations
6. **Elections** Assistant Church Wardens; Parochial Church Council Members.
7. **Appointments** Electoral Roll Officer; Gift Aid Officer; Sidespersons; Independent Examiner of Church Accounts; PCC Representation for Readers and Pastoral Assistants
8. **'Looking forward'** by the Rector
9. **Any other business**

There will be an initial meeting of the PCC immediately after the APCM, to appoint Church Officers (Secretary, Treasurer, Vice Chair, Safeguarding Officer) and agree date of next PCC.

Minutes of the 97th Annual Meeting of Parishioners

ST. MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS PARISH CHURCH, HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING

Sunday 16th May 2021

In attendance

Priest-in-Charge Reverend John Barron, Curate John d'Silva and Parishioners, either physically present in Church or present virtually on Zoom/dial-in.

1. The Rector welcomed everyone – those in Church, those on Zoom - to the meeting. He commented that the Annual Report had been made available on-line, and that some hard copies were available in Church. Additional hard copies could be obtained from the Parish Administrator.
2. The Rector opened the meeting in prayer.
3. Apologies for absence were received from Reverend Margaret Lee and Mrs Anne Goodman.
4. The Minutes of the meeting held on Sunday 25th October 2020, having been circulated, were taken as read. They were confirmed and signed.
5. **Election of Church Wardens**

The Rector had received two nominations for the office of Church Warden: Rita Turnbull and Alastair Bradley. Both Rita and Alastair were elected unanimously to serve as Church Wardens until the 2022 APCM. They were thanked and congratulated.

This concluded the meeting of Parishioners

Minutes of the ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING held on 16th May 2021

Those present had had access to a copy of the 2021 Annual Report, either on-line or in hard copy, and the Rector guided them through the Report as follows:

1. **The Minutes** of the meeting held on 25th October 2020, having been circulated, were taken as read. They were unanimously accepted and were signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

2. **No other items of business were notified.**

3. Electoral Roll and Parish Statistics

- a) Electoral Roll - The current number on the electoral roll is 123, a decrease of 6 over last year. Typically, the electoral roll grows as the year progresses.
- b) Parish statistics – The Rector highlighted some of the key statistics: our worshipping community numbers 124; usual Sunday numbers are 31 adults. All parish statistics have been greatly affected by the restrictions associated with the pandemic. Alongside those who worship in Church, others access our on-line worship. The section 'A Year in Numbers' in the 2021 Annual Report gives full details.

4. Rector's Report

The Rector delivered his Report, found on pages 9–11 of the 2021 Annual Report.

5. Presentation of Annual Report for 2021

a) Annual Accounts, Treasurer's Reports, Independent Examiner's Report

- Treasurer SB presented the Annual Accounts.
- SB thanked the Close the Gap team for the funds they had raised for the Church in continuing challenging circumstances. She also thanked others for individual fundraising efforts.
- There were no questions for the Treasurer. The Accounts were accepted unanimously, as were the Treasurer's reports and the Independent Examiner's Report.

The Rector then referred the meeting to the following Reports:

b) Church Wardens' Reports and Fabric Reports

c) Deanery Synod Report

d) PCC Secretary's Report

e) Safeguarding Report

All of these Reports were accepted unanimously.

f) Reports from Church Affiliated Organisations

Finally, the Rector referred the meeting to the Reports submitted by the Church Affiliated Organisations. He thanked those who, year in, year out, work extremely hard to enable the many activities to take place. Life at St Michael's is very rich because of this.

The meeting voted to accept these Reports and the Annual Report in its entirety.

6. Elections

Assistant Church Warden: Thelma Steel had expressed her willingness to stand again. All were in favour.

Deanery Synod representatives: The term of office of the current representatives (David Hann, Kevin Bond and Dian Scott) continues until 2023.

PCC members: Nominations were received on behalf of Sheila Foster and David Turnbull. They were duly elected.

7. Appointments

Electoral Roll Officer – Rita Turnbull

Gift Aid Officer – Sue Bradley

Sidespersons – see amended list at bottom of page 6 of Annual Report.

Independent Examiner of Church Accounts – Peter Brown

PCC Representation for Readers and Pastoral Assistants – Anne Clappison

8. 'Looking forward' by the Rector

The Rector shared his vision for the year ahead.

'At last year's October APCM I offered the image of a sailing boat to help illustrate the kind of journey we are taking together. We have a sense of our current direction but we might have some changes of direction on the journey – some tacking or reaching or running with the wind. Just as a sailing boat is dependent on the wind to move so we the church are dependent on God to give us the energy, the impetus, that we need to move. Importantly, I think, I want to help us to notice the direction of the wind to work with it to help us navigate the journey.

I want to highlight a few things that I've noticed at this stage of the journey:

- With the pandemic, the increased challenges that people in our communities face: financial, social isolation, bereavement. I've also seen the many assets, the great giftedness of the people in our communities;
- I see some continued decrease in the number of people in the core of church but also increases in the number of people on the fringes of church;
- There are challenges in meeting financial commitments as church but I also see incredible energy and commitment and creativity in meeting those challenges;
- There is uncertainty about the future of our group ministry with Newbottle and Hetton but some shared involvement in our community work along with some rekindled ecumenical relationship;
- At this stage there is still uncertainty about the future in respect to our co-existence with Covid but I see incredible flexibility, resilience, commitment to each other and the wider community in our church.

This coming year will see the launch of a refreshed diocesan strategy, with priorities identified in the areas of:

- Caring for God's Creation;
- Challenging Poverty;
- Energising Growth;
- Engaging with Children and Young People.

We have already made some really great progress in the area of Challenging Poverty with our work on the next chapter of our Space4 project. The refreshed strategy, overall, may offer us a helpful framework within which to begin to chart the journey ahead.

In that area of Challenging Poverty, we've agreed a new approach to our Space4 project over the next 3-5 years. This is going to involve developing our foodbank into a community store, establishing a café in the Kepier building and developing the community hub in the Newbottle Street building. We've had some really great news in we've had a successful and substantial grant award from lottery that will give us much of the funding we need to start this. We're in the process of recruiting a new operational manager and we're aiming to begin the project on 1st July.

Ultimately, I think that a crucial part of our task at the moment is to work out how to flourish as God's church and how to help our local communities to flourish. We can only do that if we look to God. We will need to seek God's guidance, God's strength, God's inspiration. And so therefore I want to make a call to us today, a call to prayer as a church over these coming months.

At this time between Ascension and Pentecost this includes prayer for our wider community including that more people in our community will come to live the best possible lives they can by knowing Christ in their lives. Over these coming weeks and months that call to prayer will continue to underpin what we're seeking to do as God's church, to discern and work out together what God is calling us to be and to do as church in these times.'

9. Any other business

Jean Henderson offered thanks on behalf of the Church to the Rector and the Ministry Team for all they had done to keep our Church flourishing during another challenging year.

There being no other business, the APCM closed with the Grace.

Parochial Church Council 2021-22

The PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical, as well as the maintenance and upkeep of the ancient building. The PCC meets monthly throughout the year and may hold extraordinary meetings as and when they are required.

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules.

The Standing Committee of the PCC is the only committee required by law. It has the power to transact business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the PCC. The Standing Committee consists of the Rector, Church Wardens, Assistant Wardens, Treasurer and Secretary.

During the past year, the following served as members of the PCC:

Incumbent Curate	Reverend John Barron Reverend John d'Silva
Church Wardens	Rita Turnbull, Alastair Bradley
Asst. Church Warden	Thelma Steel
Treasurer, Gift Aid Officer	Sue Bradley
Secretary	Angela Slater
Safeguarding Officer	Kevin Bond
Readers' Representative	Anne Clappison
Deanery Synod Representatives	David Hann, Dian Scott, Kevin Bond Term of Office 2020-23
Elected members	Sheila Foster, David Turnbull Term of Office 2021-24
	Malcolm Foster, Brian Scott, Clare Taylor Term of Office 2020-23
	Kathleen Close, Lynn Scott Term of Office 2019-22
Co-opted members	George Peebles (Director of Music) Reverend Margaret Lee, Reverend Judith Howes, Susan Elsey, Simon Hardy Term of Office 2020-23

Sidespersons

Joan Beattie
Evelyn Garbutt
Jean Henderson
Dian Scott
Rita Turnbull
Sheila Wynne

Sheila Gamble
Elaine Harkness
Brian Scott
David Turnbull
Beth Weedon

A Year in Numbers: some facts and figures from our Mission Statistics

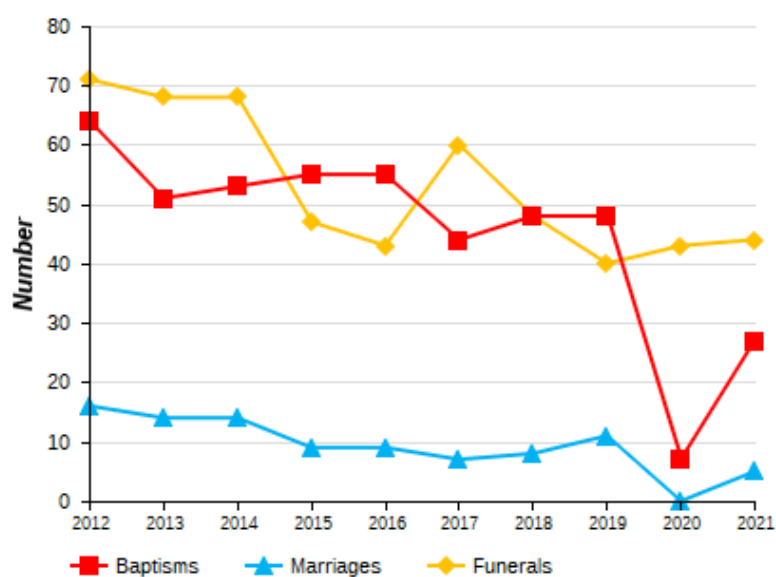
The number of parishioners on the Electoral Roll was 125, this compares with 123 last year. These figures are significantly lower than the 225 people on the Roll in 2017 before the most recent full revision.

Our 'Worshipping Community' (those who regularly come to church, at least every 2 months) is currently at 132 people, shown in the table below. We had 20 people join us in the year but also 14 who sadly are no longer worshipping with us, including a number of dearly loved members of our church family who died during the year. Our attendance figures are showing a marked decrease on numbers in the years prior to the pandemic but are showing the beginnings of small increases in worshipping community of 132 as compared with 124 last year. There are notable increases in the number of children and young people who are part of the community.

Worshipping Community

<i>Age</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>
<i>0-17</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>18-69</i>	<i>148</i>	<i>167</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>70+</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>170</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>56</i>

In the last 2 years reporting of figures for 'Usual Sunday Attendance' (USA) have been suspended because of the pandemic. This figure however is important for us to understand. In 2019 on a 'usual' Sunday we had 93 adults and 5 children attending a number of different worship services in church. Immediately after the pandemic on returning to church this figure was just over 20 attending a single service in the church building. In October, following a 'season of invitation' this number was upwards of 50. By the end of the year we were beginning to see some slow increases in attendees with all of our services now reinstated but USA still very much lower than numbers of people attending before the pandemic. We also reinstated our mid-week services of Holy Communion on a Tuesday evening and Thursday morning: Thursday morning services typically have over 20 people attending.

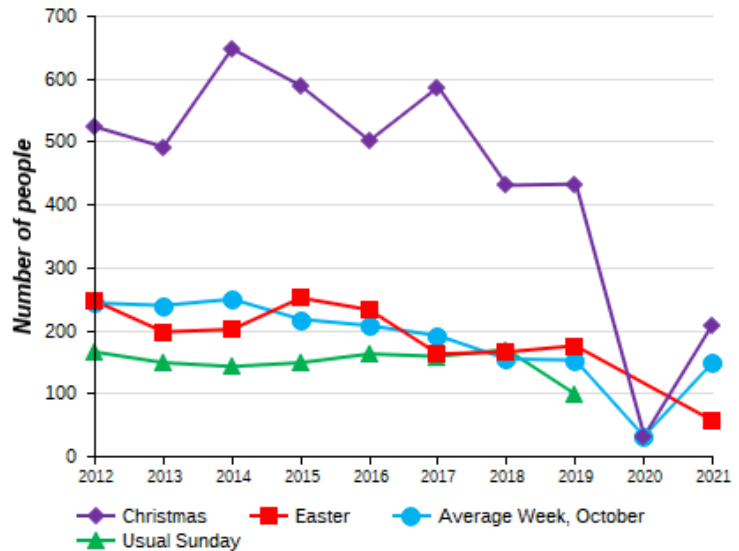


We continue to serve our community through funeral ministry: we conducted 44 funeral services last year (as compared with 43 in 2020 & 40 in 2019).

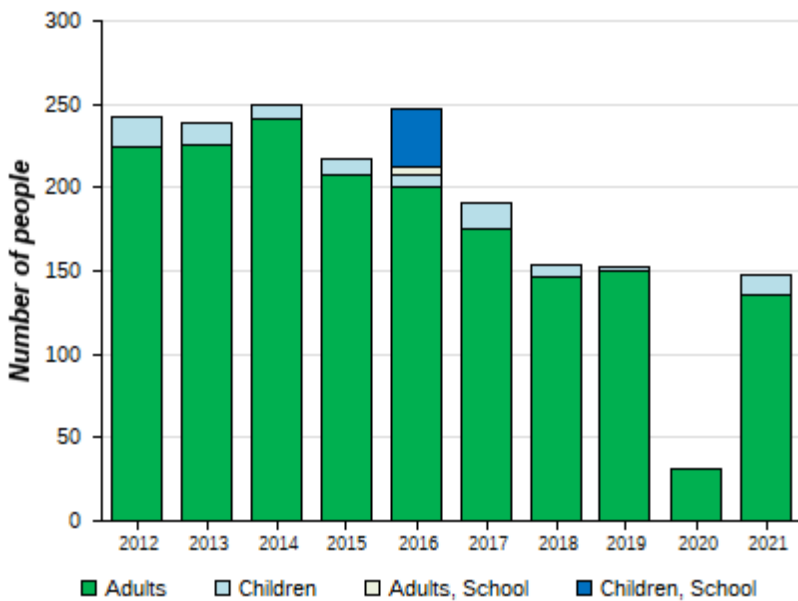
We have significant numbers of people coming back to us for other 'occasional offices' (but not at the levels we had before the pandemic). Last year there were 27 baptisms in our church (compared to 7 in 2020 and 48 in 2019). We also held 5 weddings (we did no weddings in 2020 and 11 in 2019).

We had significant numbers of people coming to worship with us for seasonal services in December: 208 people came to services on Christmas Day and Christmas Eve (this compares with 30 in 2020 and 432 in 2019).

There were 56 people worshipping with us on Easter day last year, compared to none in 2020 and 175 in 2019.



Our average weekly attendance figure in October was 148. This was very close to the numbers in 2019. This figure includes a very encouraging increase in the number of children coming to us, including to our new 'Sparks' family service. (While we ought to be encouraged, it is a little deceptive as October was during our 'season of invitation').



We have not yet been able to reintroduce our school based 'Open the Book' assemblies but we held two church-based and one on-line Christmas carol service with schools and welcomed others into church over that period.

The Year in Review – a word from our Rector

I had huge admiration for the people of our church as we continued to respond to the challenges of the covid pandemic last year and were able, in so many ways, to ‘flourish’ and to help our communities flourish in the time of covid. For a large part of the year we held worship with a limited number of services in the building itself and continuing our on-line offering for those unable to physically be present. Our ministry team, choir and technical team showed great commitment throughout the year in enabling us to offer a range of worship offerings.

In the first half of the year, our church building had reduced seating to allow for social distancing – we had a staged reintroduction of our pews and, by the middle of the year in time for the removal of national restrictions for weddings and funeral attendance, all of our pews were in church with seating set-aside to enable people to come into church who felt vulnerable. Throughout the year we responded to the multiple changes in government guidance and national law and sought to keep a balance between removing restrictions in church and enabling people who felt vulnerable to be able to worship. We intentionally responded slowly to opening up (usually a couple of weeks behind government announcements, allowing time for changed guidance to arrive and be built into revised risk assessments!). This inevitably felt too slow for some and too fast for others in our congregations but we tried to keep a balanced approach. By the end of the year, and ahead of Christmas, we had returned to our full complement of worship services and were able to be open for our larger regular Christmas services.

With the wider reopening of our church buildings our work with children and young people thankfully restarted meeting in person thanks to our talented and committed leader and her helpers and also thanks to the continued enthusiasm and creativity of our young folks. In the later part of the year, our Sparks service, especially for families with young children, met monthly in the Keping Hall and held two outdoor gatherings over the summer holiday. During the year we celebrated the contribution that our Toddler Group had made for over 50 years to our local community: we took a pause in the operation of the group and began exploring how to operate the group in future years. By the end of the year, we were really pleased that local nurseries and our local schools came to us for Christmas services and concerts (some physically in the building, some ‘virtually’ with the help of technology). We were really pleased that young people from Keping school were involved in services at Remembrance and at Christmas for the first time for quite a number of years.

We continued to give focus to pastoral care for our church community and beyond in the year with our ministry team and a wider team of people seeking to support people through telephone contact and home visits. This included distributing Communion to people in the community. The production and distribution of our parish magazine remained an important way of remaining in touch with people who were very cut off for a large part of the year. In the early part of the year, we held fellowship groups on Zoom – these included quizzes, beetle drives and bingo which also had a fundraising element. Our on-line study groups were also a feature of the first part of the year.

Very sadly, a number of much loved members of our church community and wider family died in the year: this included our previous Rector The Venerable Sue Pinnington. We give thanks for the

lives of those who died in the year and thank God for their contribution to our church and community and with their loved ones we grieve their passing. We've sought to reach out and support our wider community in a number of ways in a year where there has been much grief, for example, through our funeral ministry, an 'All Souls' service for the bereaved and the reintroduction of a bereavement support group which we run monthly.

We were delighted to host the 'Feast Service' in the building during October's Houghton Feast: we were joined by the Bishop of Durham, the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, the Mayor of Sunderland, our Member of Parliament and other civic guests in church. The evening saw us hold an outdoor 'Community Hymn Sing' (for the first time since the 1970's). We also held an outdoor service for Remembrance Sunday (this is traditionally held in the church building) with literally hundreds attending on the Broadway (which went so well we will consider doing it in this way in future years). Advent and Christmas saw the reintroduction of some of our traditions including our Crib Service and Carol Services – numbers were managed to make sure people attending felt safe and they were very well attended. Throughout the year we were very blessed by the music of our choir under the direction of our musical director, our contemporary music group and the Gilpin Singers.

Last year was a significant year in our Space4 project moving to a 'New Chapter'. In July we launched a new stage of the project funded by the Lottery Reaching Communities Fund. We continue to aim to be a 'Space4 everyone to flourish': focussing on responding to food poverty, supporting people struggling with isolation or anxiety (especially the elderly and those feeling marginalised), challenging inequalities facing children and young people. We are aiming to do this while moving to more of a 'social enterprise' model so the project can become more sustainable in future. A good example of our shift in focus is moving our foodbank to more of a community foodstore where people can come and have agency to choose the food they need and make a donation if they're able to. This is much more in line with the community 'food cupboard' we have always had in Space4 where we value everyone's contribution to the cupboard and no-one is turned away. In peak months we were feeding upwards of 140 households from the foodbank/foodstore. In addition, in the later part of the year we reopened our Newbottle Street Drop-in and recruited new staff and volunteers to support the project.

There remained significant pressures on our church finances last year with reduced income from many of our normal income streams – we were very grateful to all who were able to continue to give generously to church in both financial giving, the giving of time and talents and the endlessly creative ways we've managed to fundraise (despite covid restrictions). In order to meet increasing local and central costs we anticipate that we will need to give focus to energising growth across church: this will take time and in the interim, we continue to try to manage our finances well with great support from our Treasurer and wider Finance Group.

Throughout the year, there was a huge amount of work involved in navigating the pandemic from our PCC and our Standing Committee (who met weekly on Zoom); our Parish Administrator also provided great support 'behind the scenes' working in the office and remotely at times. We owe a great debt of thanks to all those who worked tirelessly in the background and who helped our navigating the recovery phase of the pandemic last year.

The year 2021 saw the launch of the refreshed Diocesan Strategy providing a set of priorities to focus on in the areas of: *Energising Growth, Engaging with Children and Young People, Challenging Poverty, Caring for Creation*. We began work in the year looking at our own priorities as parish and seeing how they fit into this framework. We started early in the year on the Challenging Poverty priority and are making some good progress (including through our Space4 Project). In addition, later in the year we started work with PCC looking at the other areas and we will continue working on this in the year ahead to help us in our planning for the future. Towards the end of last year, we held some preliminary discussions about the need to plan for the move to a group ministry with St Matthew's Newbottle and St Michael & All Angels, Easington Lane. We anticipate this will be another important part of our planning for the future in the year ahead.

Last year was a very difficult year in many ways for the people of our church and wider communities and these times continue to hold huge challenges for many of us and for many others in our world. My encouragement to us over these last years of the pandemic has been not only how do we learn to live with whatever challenges we face but rather how do we flourish even with the challenges.

As I reflect over this last year, I remain incredibly heartened by the many ways that the people of our churches have enabled each other and others to flourish. I continue feeling it a great privilege to be the spiritual leader of this church as we seek together to continue to be a blessing to our communities. We have done this in bounds in our past, including our recent past in the pandemic, and will continue to do so, I'm confident, in our future.

Reverend John Barron
Rector of St Michael and All Angels, Houghton-le-spring

**ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS
HOUGHTON LE SPRING**

**ANNUAL STATEMENT
OF ACCOUNTS**

1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2021

**PCC Treasurer
Mrs Sue Bradley**

**Independent Examiner
Mr Peter Brown**

**St Michael and All Angels Parish Church
Church Street
Houghton le Spring
DH4 4DN**

Registered Charity No. 1135095

St Michael and All Angels, Houghton le Spring

Treasurer's Annual Report for Year 1 January – 31 December 2021

Overall Bank Balance

The end of year Overall PCC and Next 900 Bank Accounts Balance at **31 December 2021** is **£39,794.86** the breakdown and comparison to previous years is detailed below:-

	December 2019	December 2020	December 2021
PCC - Unrestricted	£33,003.70	£29,232.14	£25,024.86
PCC – Restricted	£ 4,000.00	£11,270.00	£14,770.00
TOTAL	£37,003.70	£40,502.14	£39,794.86
Next 900 Account	£ 2,786.97	£ 3,454.61	£ 3,898.61
Overall Total	£39,790.67	£43,956.75	£43,693.47
CBF Legacies	£ 163.33	£ 164.09	£ 164.11

Assets

The PCC hold a log of all material assets and this report covers only the monetary assets.

Outstanding Liabilities

We have no outstanding liabilities.

Receipts and Payments for 2021 in comparison to previous years.

	December 2019	December 2020	December 2021
Receipts	£127,009	£ 90,192	£104,208
Payments	£116,826	£ 86,694	£104,915

An overview breakdown of some of the main headings of Receipts and Payments and comparison to previous year is detailed below:-

Receipts	December 2019	December 2020	December 2021
Planned Giving	£ 43,853	£ 43,951	£ 46,709
Gift Aid Recovered	£ 12,892	£ 12,332	£ 9,363
Collections	£ 13,055	£ 3,501	£ 7,168
Donations	£ 12,881	£ 6,956	£ 3,328
Online Donations	-	£ 703	£ 1,017
Parish Magazine Sales	£ 1,367	£ 1,770	£ 1,881
PCC Fees	£ 5,932	£ 4,656	£ 8,504
Fundraising	£ 13,959	£ 2,232	£ 4,644

Transfer from Restricted £ 11,329 £ 2,230 £ 0

As you will see our Planned Giving remains at a good and consistent level, however our actual overall Regular Givers are down from 2020:-.

Regular Planned Givers	2020	2021
Parish Giving Scheme	41	40
Standing Order	35	33
Stewardship Envelope	37	28
Total Regular Givers	113	101

Gift Aid recovered although claimed in 2021 relates to income from 2020 and up to 31 March 2021. The income is down due to reduced Donations and Collections.

Church Collections from our Church Services, Funerals, Weddings, Baptisms and Other Events have somewhat recovered this year compared to the 2020 figure, due to restrictions being relaxed and more Church activity taking place.

Parish Magazine Sales have been reasonably consistent over the last year. In January 2021 our new pricing structure came into effect (£6 per annum for an email version and £1 per copy for the printed version or £10 instead of £12 for a full year). Thank you to all involved in the production of the Magazine especially Malcolm Foster and the magazine distributors.

PCC Fees - with Funerals, Weddings and Burial of Ashes being able to take place in 2021 although with tight restrictions especially in the first half of the year and lesser restrictions in the second part the income has recovered from 2020 figures during lockdown.

Fundraising has been difficult during the pandemic but we held some really good zoom events in the earlier part of the year starting with an Auction in January followed by a Beetle Drive in February and Bingo Night in May. Later in the year we were able to hold a takeaway café at Houghton Feast and a Christmas Coffee morning. Thank you to all involved in arranging and making these happen and those who contributed and participated. The Bonus Ball raised a wonderful £1598 in 2021 – thank you to Brian Scott for organising and to all who take part. Thank you also to Sheila Gamble who continues to raise funds with her knitted rabbits and greetings cards.

Payments	December 2019	December 2020	December 2021
Parish Share	£ 48,623	£ 35,000	£ 49,200
Clergy & Staffing	£ 13,595	£ 13,353	£ 9,303
Repairs & Redecoration	£ 8,232	£ 2,525	£ 921
Church Running	£ 27,073	£ 20,171	£ 18,816
Parish Magazine Costs	£ 1,020	£ 1,020	£ 1,037
Transfer to Restricted	£ -	£ 9,500	£ 3,500

We have paid our full Parish Share of £49,200 in 2021, which is an excellent achievement especially in the circumstances – well done us.

Clergy and Staffing costs are down mainly due to Salary Sacrifice by our Verger and Organist and lower expenses from our Rector and Curate.

Repairs and Redecoration costs are particularly low for the year (£921), however a great deal has been achieved:-

The attempted theft of lead from the Organ loft roof caused damage to the roof allowing water to ingress and cause damage to the organ.

A big thank you to the Friends of Houghton Church who paid for repairs to the Organ Loft Roof (£5,854.80). We also received an Insurance Claim payment of £1,230.80 for Roof repairs / Organ repair due to water damage.

The Friends of Houghton Church also paid for the replacement of our old wooden stairs with new steel stairs (£1,428) giving us much safer access to the Bell Tower.

Thank you to the National Lottery Heritage Fund who awarded us a £6,300 grant towards the safe re-opening of Church during the Pandemic restrictions. This allowed us to have the gutters cleaned and repaired, jet washing of outdoor areas, floor cleaning within Church, servicing of the Organ, storage of pews during socially distanced safe seating in Church and replacement of tap in toilet at the rear of Church. Also provision of hand sanitisers, paper cups, paper towels, 2 kettles, mobile phone, Church signage (Notice Board facing the Broadway and A boards) and literature (A Guide to St Michael & All Angels and Book Marks).

Reduced use of the Church building and careful management of maintenance and utilities also contributed to lower overall church running costs.

Restricted Budget Breakdown

Balance carried forward from 2020:

Organ / Music Fund	£ 2,000
Legacy	£ 770
Parish Share Contingency	£ 8,500

Income 2021

Parish Share Contingency	£ 3,500 (Transferred from Unrestricted)
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Total as at 31 Dec 2021 **£14,770**

Next 900 Account

Balance carried forward from 2020	£3,454.61
Income in 2021	£ 444.00
Total Balance	£3,898.61

(Please see attached detailed Receipts and Payments Accounts for Year ended 31 December 2021)

The Toddler Group which operated independently and who managed their own finances has now sadly closed.

End of Year Summary

I think we all agree that following on from 2020, 2021 has again been a strange, unpredictable and difficult year, although the second part has been somewhat brighter.

Overall, we have been able to maintain satisfactory Unrestricted Reserves and are in a stable financial position as we enter 2022, although we still need to carefully manage budgets especially around predicted price increases.

Although our Planned Giving remains consistent, we should note that our regular Planned Givers have reduced. There are opportunities we could consider to further promote St Michaels and All Angels to the wider community, also to look at ways to enable more / easier access to online giving and we will start looking at these during 2022.

In Sept / Oct 2021 we agreed to pay a Parish Pledge of £47,000 in 2022 (our Guided Pledge from the Diocesan is £50,430) we have agreed to review this on a Quarterly basis with the aim of paying the full guided pledge amount by the end of 2022.

I would like to say thank you to Rector John and Philippa Elsey our Administrator for their continued help and support throughout the year.

Thank you to all for your ongoing generosity and support throughout the year.

Sue Bradley
PCC Treasurer

St Michael & All Angels Houghton-le-Spring
Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2021
Receipts and Payments Accounts

	Note	Unrestricted Fund	Unrestricted Designated Fund	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2021	Total Funds 2020
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Receipts							
Voluntary receipts:							
Planned giving		46,709	-	528	-	47,237	44,524
Collections		7,168	-	-	-	7,168	3,501
Gift Aid recovered		9,363	-	-	-	9,363	12,332
All other giving/voluntary	2	13,832	-	-	-	13,832	8,085
		77,072	-	528	-	77,600	68,442
Activities for generating funds	3	4,779	-	-	-	4,779	3,949
Investment income	4	101	-	-	-	101	92
Church activities:							
Income from trading	5	1,881	-	-	-	1,881	4,676
Asset sales	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other receipts	7	20,375	-	-	-	20,375	13,761
		22,256	-	-	-	22,256	18,437
Total receipts		104,208	-	528	-	104,736	90,921
Payments							
Church activities:							
Parish share		49,200	-	-	-	49,200	35,000
Clergy and staffing costs	8	9,303	-	-	-	9,303	13,353
Church running expenses	9	18,816	-	-	-	18,816	20,171
Hall running costs	10	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mission giving and donations	11	3,405	-	-	-	3,405	5,128
Costs of trading	12	10,973	-	-	-	10,973	1,170
Repairs and redecorations	13	921	-	-	-	921	2,525
Asset purchases	14	-	-	-	-	-	-
		92,619	-	-	-	92,619	77,347
Cost of generating funds	15	12,296	-	84	-	12,380	9,408
Governance costs	16	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Outgoing Resources costs	16	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments		104,915	-	84	-	104,999	86,755
Excess of receipts over payments		(707)	-	444	-	(263)	4,166
Transfers between funds	17	(3,500)	-	3,500	-	-	-
		(4,207)	-	3,944	-	(263)	4,166
Sale/(purchase) of investments		-	-	-	-	-	-
Cash at bank and in hand at 1 Jan		29,232	-	14,725	-	43,957	39,791
Cash at bank and in hand at 31 Dec		25,025	-	18,669	-	43,693	46,187

St Michael & All Angels Houghton-le-Spring
 Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December
 Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the year

	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Unrestricted Designated Fund	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2021	Total Funds 2020
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Cash funds							
Bank current account		25,025	-	18,669	-	43,693	43,957
CBF deposit fund						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
Other cash funds						-	-
		25,025		18,669	-	43,693	43,957
Other monetary assets							
Income tax recoverable						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
Investment assets							
Investment Fund Shares at market value						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
Assets retained for Church use							
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
Liabilities							
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
						-	-

Further Analysis of Receipts and Payments

	Note	Unrestricted Fund	Unrestricted Designated Fund	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2021	Total Funds 2020
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Receipts							
All other giving/voluntary receipts:	2						
Other regular gifts		1,286	-	-	-	1,286	129
Donations, appeals, etc		3,328	-	-	-	3,328	6,956
Legacies		-	-	-	-	-	1,000
Recurring grants		-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-recurring one-off grants		9,218	-	-	-	9,218	-
Other funds generated		-	-	-	-	-	-
		13,832	-	-	-	13,832	8,085
Activities for generating funds:	3						
Bookstall sales - fund raising		-	-	-	-	-	-
Magazine income - advertising		135	-	-	-	135	1,563
Other events, etc		4,644	-	-	-	4,644	2,387
		4,779	-	-	-	4,779	3,950
Investment Income:	4						
Dividends		-	-	-	-	-	-
Trust fund interest		-	-	-	-	-	-
Bank and building society interest		101	-	-	-	101	92
Rent from lands or buildings		-	-	-	-	-	-
Rent from Masts and other property		-	-	-	-	-	-
		101	-	-	-	101	92
Income from Trading:	5						
Bookstall sales - trading		-	-	-	-	-	-
Church hall lettings - trading		-	-	-	-	-	-
Parish magazine sales		1,881	-	-	-	1,881	1,770
Use of photocopier		-	-	-	-	-	-
Other income		(0)	-	-	-	(0)	2,906
		1,881	-	-	-	1,881	4,676
Asset sales:	6						
Sales of fixed assets		-	-	-	-	-	-
Other receipts:	7						
PCC Fees for weddings and funerals		8,504	-	-	-	8,504	4,656
Assigned Fees for weddings and funerals		10,640	-	-	-	10,640	7,581
Insurance claims		1,231	-	-	-	1,231	-
Surplus - sales of fixed assets		-	-	-	-	-	-
Sundry income for Mission		-	-	-	-	-	-
Sundry income		-	-	-	-	-	1,524
		20,375	-	-	-	20,375	13,761

Payments

Church activities:

Missionary giving and donations	11	3,405	-	-	-	3,405	5,128
Clergy and staffing costs activities	8	9,303	-	-	-	9,303	13,353
Church running costs	9	14,182	-	-	-	14,182	13,228
Church utility costs	9	4,635	-	-	-	4,635	6,943
Hall running costs	10	-	-	-	-	-	-
Costs of trading	12	10,973	-	-	-	10,973	1,170
		42,498	-	-	-	42,498	39,822

Major repairs and building works:

Church major repairs	13	921	-	-	-	921	2,525
Hall + major repairs		-	-	-	-	-	-
New building costs		-	-	-	-	-	-
		921	-	-	-	921	2,525

Asset purchases:

Purchase of fixed assets	14	-	-	-	-	-	-
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Cost of generating voluntary income:

Costs of Church Activities and Events	15	1,079	-	-	-	1,079	1,151
Fees paid out for weddings and other services		10,634	-	-	-	10,634	7,685
Investment management costs		583	-	84	-	667	571
Bookstall costs		-	-	-	-	-	-
		12,296	-	84	-	12,380	9,407

Governance costs:

Examination/audit fee	16	-	-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-	-

Other Outgoing Resources:

Other Outgoing Resources:		-	-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-	-

Independent Examiner's Report to the members of St Michael and all Angels Parish Church, Houghton le Spring, Parochial Church Council.

I report on the annual accounts for the year ended 31st December 2021.

Respective responsibilities of the PCC and Independent Examiner

The members of the PCC consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners section 145(5) (b) of the 2011 Act; and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission.

An examination includes a review of the accounting records and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the management committee concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in a full audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matters have come to my attention

1. which give me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements

- to keep accounting records in accordance with s.130 of the 2011 Act; or
- to prepare accounts which accord with these accounting records have not been met; or

2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Peter Brown, BA(Hons)

42 Coptleigh, Houghton le Spring, Tyne & Wear, DH5 8JE

1 March 2022

SPACE4
HOUGHTON LE SPRING

ANNUAL STATEMENT
OF ACCOUNTS

1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2021

Accounts Prepared by
Social Enterprise Acumen

Independent Examiner
Mr Peter Brown

Space4
76 Newbottle Street
Houghton le Spring
DH4 4GB



Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	Period start date 01/01/2021	To	Period end date 31/12/2021
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Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations	4,163		-	4,163	9,106
PCC Grant	4,200	-	-	4,200	4,200
Other Grants	-	108,406	-	108,406	73,260
Fundraising	385	-	-	385	
Sales	1,319	-	-	1,319	-
Other	432	-	-	432	360
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	10,499	108,406	-	118,905	86,926
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	10,499	108,406	-	118,905	86,926
A3 Payments					
Staff Salaries	2,046	35,281	-	37,327	21,556
Sessional Workers	1,450	6,715	-	8,165	2,985
Rent	1,133	7,559	-	8,693	4,517
Utilities and Overheads	254	551	-	805	1,261
Materials and Activities		587	-	587	730
Expenses	124	1,780	-	1,903	1,117
Transport		722	-	722	1,054
Food and Consumables		11,692	-	11,692	19,500
Facilities and Equipment	346	238	-	583	2,502
External Support	40	156	-	195	146
Professional Fees	65	1,780	-	1,846	-
Other		36	-	36	455
Sub total	5,458	67,096	-	72,554	55,821
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	5,458	67,096	-	72,554	55,821
Net of receipts/(payments)	5,041	41,310	-	46,351	31,105
A5 Transfers between funds			-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	26,996	23,484	-	50,480	19,375
Cash funds this year end	32,037	64,794	-	96,831	50,480

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank Account 33254356	30,744	64,794	-
	PayPal Statement	1,141		-
	Petty Cash	152		-
	Total cash funds	32,037	64,794	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
	Details	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name		Date of approval

Independent Examiner's Report on the Accounts

Report to the Management Committee of Space 4 on the accounts for the year ended 31st. December 2021.

Respective responsibilities of the Management Committee and Independent Examiner

The Management Committee are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year (under section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the act)) and that an independent examination is needed.

As the Independent Examiner, it is my responsibility to

- examine the accounts (under section 43(3)(a) of the Act);
- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners (under section 43(7)(b) of the Act); and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the management committee concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in a full audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matters have come to my attention

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - to keep accounting records
 - to prepare accounts which accord with these accounting recordshave not been met;
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Peter Brown BA(Hons.)
42 Coptleigh, Houghton le Spring, DH5 8JE
1 March 2022

Church Wardens' Report and Fabric Report

Wardens: Rita Turnbull and Alastair Bradley

Assistant Warden: Thelma Steel

Due to circumstances this year we have not managed to do a proper check of the Terrier in Church but will hopefully get it done in the next month. We are beginning slowly to get back to some level of normality after the disruption of COVID while being aware of the safety of our more vulnerable members of the congregation. We still have the one-way system in operation with the hand sanitising stations around Church but we have reintroduced our coffee/tea at the back of Church after the Thursday Morning Service and 10 am Sunday Service.

Work needed to be carried out on the Organ due to flooding of the bell ringing chamber. The cause of the flooding has been rectified and the Organ repaired by Harrison and Harrison. As part of this flooding we needed to replace the wooden steps over the roof into the Bell Chamber with steel steps. We had the floor in church professionally cleaned which meant that everything had to be removed from the body of Church and some pews taken into storage. There is an ongoing leak to the radiator at the back left hand side of Church to which a plumber has been out and hoped to address the problem but to no avail as yet.

The Wardens would like to thank our Director of Music, George Peebles, and our choir for their much appreciated contribution to the worship in our Church. We would also like to thank Tim Cullingworth for his professional assistance in broadcasting our online services. A huge thank you goes to our Young Church leaders and helpers, our Sidespeople/Stewards and members of the coffee rota. The Wardens would like to thank the members of the Ministry Team for their brilliant contribution to our services since we came back into Church and helping to maintain the mission and ministry of St. Michael and All Angels.

Rita Turnbull
Churchwarden

Electoral Roll Report

This year's Electoral Roll stands at 125 which is up from 123 last year. A few people have been added to the Roll but we have lost a few during the pandemic and some have moved away from the area. Please let me know of any changes of address or telephone numbers.

Rita Turnbull
Electoral Roll Officer

Deanery Synod of Chester-le-Street and Houghton

Since last year's APCM there have been two Deanery Synod meetings. The first of these was held on the 21st July via Zoom. The Area Dean, the Rev'd John Lintern, opened the meeting with prayer. It was noted that the proposed Deanery Pilgrimage had not happened due to Covid-19 and that future planning was still "on hold". An election of Officers was undertaken of which the outcome was as follows:

Lay Chair-Simon Wilkinson

Lay Vice Chair- Marilyn Besford

Secretary - Andrew Cresswell

Treasurer-Malcolm Adamson

Election of Diocesan Synod

House of Laity

Karen Richardson

Simon Wilkinson

Marilyn Besford

Judith Lees

Previously elected

Elsie Forrester

Margaret Whitley

House of Clergy

Rev'd Gareth Lloyd

Rev'd Brenda Forrester

Rev'd Mark Harrison

Rev'd Tim Wall

Rev'd Christine Britcliffe

Rev'd Julie Wing

The Area Dean gave a brief summary of Living in Love and Faith and it was discussed. This is a book and course which explores ideas about what it means to be human in relation to people's different genders, sexualities and backgrounds. All incumbents had received a copy of LiLaF from the Bishop. This was to be addressed by parishes in the Autumn. Resources were available from the Church website. Additional resources were planned to support parishes in vacancy. The Rev'd

John Lintern was on sabbatical between September and November. During this period the Rev'd Tim Wall served as Acting Dean.

Deanery Synod meeting held on the 29th.September

Rev'd Tim Wall, Acting Dean, opened the meeting in prayer.

Rev'd Wall gave a brief update on vacancies. He advised that those parishes in the Deanery currently in vacancy are in preparation for the selection process which is expected to take place in late Autumn.

Living in Love and Faith Chaired by Simon Wilkinson, Synod Lay Chair.

Simon gave a brief introduction as outlined at the recent Diocesan Synod followed by discussion. There was a general sense of frustration as to what was expected from the parishes. Feedback was to be received by the National Church and an on-line survey is available. However, Synod felt that it was unclear as to whether individual or collective responses were expected. Concern was expressed at the timing of the process given that parishes were just emerging from the Covid pandemic. Synod asked the matter to be raised at diocesan level with clear guidance given.

Representatives informed the Synod of their Churches' experiences of the Covid pandemic and their recent steps towards a return to "normality".

Parish Share-Guided Pledges.

The deadline for submission of the parish pledge to Rev'd Tim was the 14th.October.

The Rev'd Tim has informed that the Deanery has paid 85 per cent of the parish share.

This concludes the Deanery Synod report.

David Hann

Deanery Synod Representative

Safeguarding Report 2021

Safeguarding Training

Level	Training Complete this Year	Training Required Next Year
Awareness	See Note Below	
Foundation		
Leadership		

Disclosure and Barring Checks

Total This Reporting Period	Total Due Next Reporting Period
See Note Below	

Reported Safeguarding Items

Reported This Period	Total Open and being Managed
5	2

Safeguarding Policy

- 1) PCC reviewed and recommitted to Diocese and Parish Safeguarding Policy.
- 2) Officers continue to assess all aspects of the Parish Safeguarding Policy to ensure full compliance with the requirements. An improvement plan is in place and monitored regularly for progress on the implementation of necessary changes.
- 3) Church leaders and officers are made aware of any safeguarding concerns via the reporting arrangements set out in the Church's Safeguarding Policy. The policy also provides for robust arrangements for the appropriate recording and effective management of those incidents either internally or where appropriate with the support of the Diocese Safeguarding Advisor or other 3rd party agencies.

4) None of the known reported concerns relate to any services or activities provided by Church. All recorded items relate to external incidents reported to the Church officials who are offering and providing pastoral care to those involved.

Key Activities

Area	Description
Recruitment	Safer Recruitment Policy adopted
Space 4	Safer Recruitment Policy adopted, which has been applied in the recruitment to vacant positions within the project.
Church Services	PCC taking an active role in assessing safeguarding risks to ensure services can be delivered safely in line with ever changing, and removal of Covid Government and Diocesan guidelines.
Associated Trusts	Trusts and associated organisations continue to be engaged with regard the adoption of Church Safeguarding Policy
Bell Ringing	Visiting bellringers are to recommence bellringing in the tower. Safeguarding measures have been reviewed and developing.

Kevin Bond, Parish Safeguarding Officer

REPORTS FROM CHURCH GROUPS & AFFILIATED ORGNISATIONS

Prepared for the

2022 Annual Parochial Meeting

Bereavement Support : Light

Throughout the dark days of Covid lockdowns the bereavement support group was closed down like so many other of our groups, however as vaccinations were winning and covid cases declining, we opened up the group in December 2021, eager to have a meeting prior to Christmas. Initially we received only a small number of clients but subsequent meetings have seen steady growth, with newcomers returning the following month.

Light meets on the first Tuesday of the month from 1.30pm to 3pm in Space4. It is a place where the bereaved can meet and talk freely about their experiences and feelings and become a great support to each other. Light is run by myself and Rev Judith Howes.

Rev'd Margaret Lee

Liturgical Choir Report

Another sad year for many people. I am very relieved that the choir at St Michael's have been well. We have followed the church and government Covid guidelines which has kept us safe.

The choir has been able to support the worship at St Michael's throughout the pandemic whether it be pre-recorded music or singing in the church.

We were disappointed not having our usual concerts again this year in May but we were able to have our Summer Concert which everyone enjoyed.

The choir led the church's big events: Feast Evensong, Community hymn singing, Advent and Christmas Carol Services. All were well supported.

I would like to thank the choir for their commitment and support. We are always looking and hoping for new members. Also I am thankful for the support I have from Tom Ritson, Andy and Stuart.

I would like to say a thank you to Rector John for his support and encouragement to maintain our great music tradition at St Michael's.

George Peebles, Director of Music

The Friends of Houghton Hillside Cemetery

Due to Covid restrictions the committee held no meetings during 2021. We usually plan events to run throughout the year but as the groundwork had not been laid there was nothing arranged. We usually start by a tidy up event in either February or March but even outdoor meetings had been banned. However volunteers groups carried out two litter picks and the council continued to maintain the grass.

Alastair Bradley, Chair

Men's Night Out –“Last Orders”

Thanks to the efforts of Rev. John D'Silva we enjoyed a number of Quiz nights held over Zoom! The winning was not the most important part of these quizzes but it really was the taking part. We had a selection of quiz masters, who were, in no particular order, Dave Fulton, David Hann, David Turnbull, John D'Silva and Aaron Fulton. [I think that is everyone].

Memories were tested and our religious knowledge challenged. Music from past decades was revived and evenings were spent in good company.

Many thanks to all who took part and the Quiz masters.

Alastair Bradley, Organiser

Mothers Union Report for APCM

Mothers Union started to meet again in September 2021.

We have 40 members , Sadly, Miriam Breckon passed away in January.

At that meeting we all wrote 3 true things about ourselves and a false thing about ourselves. This went down very well, and we all had a good laugh which was needed after the 18mths we have all had. After we had coffee and a lovely piece of cake to celebrate our return.

In October we collected toiletry items. These were shared between Space 4 and the Salvation Army. Small blankets were knitted and crocheted and were given to Amiee at Walker and Morrell funeral directors for babies born asleep.

In November we made Christmas cards for the prison at Low Newton.

AGM was held in January

Branch Meal was 28th February at the Board Inn

Joan Beattie, Mothers Union Leader

Signpost

As with all we engaged with during the past year when living with the pandemic, the production and distribution of our church magazine was problematic. My thanks go to the distribution team who, in spite of restrictions and personal concerns during very worrying times, continued to deliver the magazine to our customers in their usual way. A special thank you to our Distribution team leader, Joan Bond and Philippa Elsey, our Administrator, for her input and printing.

As many were affected this year by Covid deaths or infection, my personal challenge was coming to terms with the loss of our Co-editor Roger Elsey. Even while working away in Cyprus, Roger continued to contribute to the magazine with his insightful descriptions of life in Cyprus with “Word from the Lemon Grove”. He was always there to ask an opinion on Signpost issues. I shall miss him.

Finally my thanks to the many contributors who provide the copy (eventually) that go to make the Signpost our window to the world. Our news and views expressed through Signpost are testament to what we are at St. Michael and All Angels. Let us continue to share with our readership all we do and think.

God Bless

Malcolm Foster, Editor

2nd Houghton Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers

It was so lovely to finally get back to the unit and welcome our girls back. We have excellent numbers in each unit and have a waiting list for Rainbows.

We had a church parade at Harvest Festival, and we enjoyed being part of the church service. Many parents stayed for the service.

We held our annual Carol Service hosted by John D'Silva which was well attended by parents. The different sections all either sang a song or read a poem and the Rainbows did the Nativity play.

In February the Rangers had a day out in York which they all enjoyed. They were given a bit of independence and allowed to go off on their own meeting with leaders at certain points of the day. Every year Girlguiding celebrate Thinking Day and we are encouraged to think about our members overseas and the local community. This year the Guides decided to collect sanitary and personal hygiene products for Wearside Women In Need. The Brownies decided to collect tinned goods to donate to the foodbank. Daniel is coming along to our Brownies meeting to talk to the girls about the Foodbank.

We are looking forward to parade at the Mother's Day service on 27th March.

Looking forward we are allowed to hold residential events so a Rainbow sleepover is planned for April. We are also hoping to hold a Brownie pack holiday in the Summer.

Sheila Wynn

Kepier Management Committee

In company with most organizations, last year at the Kepier continued to be difficult as we all tried to adapt to living with Covid.

Two of our major users ceased to function, The Toddler Group is, we hope, only temporarily suspended with work in progress to find a new co-ordinator. Weight Watchers were forced to relocate due to their National Policy. A sad parting for all concerned as they have worked out of the Kepier for many, many years.

During 2020/2021 our Manager, following the 12 page Gov.uk guidance manual, fitted out the building as necessary with notices, floor tapes, masks, sanitizer etc, enabling our tenants to retain access to the building.

In late 2021 very unfortunately Dawn our Manager had an accident resulting in her being on long term sick leave. This, not for the first time in our history, has left the Trustees and Management Committee taking over day to day responsibility. A huge thank you must go to every member of this team who in a combined effort are managing to keep the Kepier open – not forgetting the residents of the front flat, who are dealing with all the bins weekly, and Bob Wilde who is attending to the outside area.

On a more positive note, although we are not encouraging fresh bookings at present, many of our regular groups have returned, and have been mostly willing to become more self sufficient for which we are most grateful.

Meanwhile we wish Dawn all the best of good wishes for her recovery and Christine in supporting her.

Anne Goodman

Sparks

Since the last APCM there have been major changes to how we operate at Sparks. Before August 2021 we sent out craft packs for families to use at home and published a video online with a story and often a song. In August 2021 we held two Summer Picnics at Kepier Hall to test how to begin doing Sparks in person. Since then we have held a monthly service, including a busy Christmas service.

We used to send out 14 activity packs, and there are now 19 families on our e-mail list for Sparks. 6 or 7 of these families are regular attenders, with the rest attending occasionally. The group therefore has a core with some clear routes to growth.

I am very grateful for the support of Anne Goodman and Ros Pickersgill when we were creating videos to put online, as well as Joan Bond for her assistance in preparing food.

Rev'd John D'Silva

Friends of the Houghton Parish Church Trust

The last two years have been difficult on so many fronts. As a Church we gradually emerged from having services at home to coming back into the building. However, we were still unable to arrange our usual Musical Weekend in May and had to disappoint our loyal, dedicated supporters for another year. The Trust has been busy in other ways, producing Christmas Cards and blank cards for sale, ensuring that funds were still coming in and we thank everyone for their generosity in so many ways, either by purchasing cards, or giving donations to the Friends. This has enabled the Trust to continue providing financial help to the P.C.C. when major works are necessary. In 2021 we were able to cover the cost of essential work to the Church Tower and Organ Loft. As 'caretakers' of an ancient building, our heritage, it is important that we preserve our beautiful Church for future generations, and it is for this reason that the Friends of Houghton Parish Church Trust in 1993 was formed. It is heartening that whenever renovation/restoration has been necessary, the Trust has been able to help financially, and it is through the generosity of each member that this is possible.

Last year we decided to hold the Friends Thanksgiving Service on the same day as the Patronal Festival in September. The Rev'd. Ian Wallis, previous Rector and Patron of the Friends, preached on this occasion. It was a huge success and gave an opportunity for Ian and Liz to reunite with friends from St. Michael's.

In the autumn of 2021, as we were unable to have our annual organ concert, Dr. Gordon Stewart came to St. Michael's and recorded and produced a C.D. of him playing the Harrison and Harrison Organ. This was the first time the organ had been recorded.

If you are not already a Friend, you may consider becoming a member from as little as £10 per annum to enable the continuing maintenance of this significant local landmark.

Jean Henderson

Flower Guild

It has been wonderful to return to arranging flowers in Church. We are very grateful for the kind and generous donations to the fund. If you wish to sponsor a pedestal at any time of the year (other than Lent or Advent) there is a sign up list on the notice board at the back of Church.

Carole Cunningham

Hand-bells

During the pandemic the team were unable to meet, but hopefully we will be able to resume later this year to prepare for Advent and Christmas. However, a few members of the team are unable to return, so we are desperate for some new recruits! If you are at all interested in joining us please get in touch.

Carole Cunningham

Gilpin Singers

Until September 2022 part of the choir met on Zoom and these members sang at the Church's Late Summer Concert. All the choir finally got back in person to practices from September 2021, socially distant of course! A successful Christmas concert was held: thanks to Laura Parkin for leading the choir and our accompanist, Graham Brown.

The ladies are now rehearsing for a summer concert in June. It is a pleasure to be able to meet together after such a long time apart.

Carole Cunningham

Young Church Report 2022

We began this year still online and holding Zoom sessions at the end of the service, however I am pleased to report that we are currently back meeting face-to-face. We decided to continue to hold the meetings after the main service at 11.15am as this suited some of our families and allowed leaders and assistants to attend the 10am church service each week. At the moment, these take place in the Kepier Hall or Community room. Following Covid measures, children are given packs of resources, (pens, pencils, scissors, glue etc) that will be needed for the session. Up until Christmas, we followed a similar format during the sessions as we have in recent years: children are introduced to a Bible story and then a small craft or activity follows. These sessions are based on the themes in church, bible stories and special feast days and services (Palm/Remembrance Sunday).

We still have a regular group of 4 or 5 children taking part each Sunday and we are excited this year to have 4 children receiving their Holy Communion before confirmation. This has involved them following a weekly scheme which prepares them for this special event. The children seem to be really enjoying the programme and have enjoyed sharing the sessions and activities with John D'Silva at the end of their sessions. It has involved parents making a commitment to ensure the children are in church each Sunday and to support them in completing their activities. As part of

the course the children have been given a bible which will be presented to them at our Mothering Sunday service this year.

As well as completing tasks/activities each session the children have also taken a role in the 'all age' worship in church where the children helped with the sermon, took part in the offertory procession and helped by choosing the music too. We look forward to taking part in these services again.

As the year progresses, we are hoping to move the Young Church back into the meeting room in church at the end of the main service. This will further develop our links back with the congregation and make the delivery of the sessions more consistent each week for parents.

A huge thank you to parents who have helped in assisting the sessions since their return, and helped to ensure that both the children and themselves are Covid safe.

If anyone knows of any primary aged school children who would enjoy hearing a bible story and then making a craft, please feel free to invite them along.

Clare Taylor, Young Church Leader

Open the Book

Because of the ongoing COVID restrictions over the last year we have not been able to go back into the schools with the 'Open the Book' stories, which has been very disappointing for the team of volunteers. We hope it is not too much longer before we can return. We have recently done two stories from 'Open the Book' in Church at the 10 am Service, the last one being at the Mothering Sunday All Age Service, which was very enjoyable as the Guides and Brownies were in Church that morning and took part in the story.

Rita Turnbull

St Michael's Toddler Group

We began 2020 as usual. Then came Covid. It was decided to close (we hoped temporarily) to keep everyone safe. After 18 months sadly we found ourselves having to accept that St Michael's Toddler Group, as we knew it, could no longer continue. Almost all our team of volunteers – so crucial to our success, feel no longer able to serve. A quick check revealed an average age as being in the mid 70's – not bad considering that it can be quite physical. So, what follows is a celebration of the last 54 years.

Pre-school Playgroups and Toddler Groups have numerous functions, not least of which is to form a link between home and school. This is not an essential prerequisite of school life nevertheless it is very helpful in smoothing the progress of a child into the nursery and school environment.

Play is the all-important word. The children learn to play together in the fullest ways. To communicate with one another and with adults, other than those within their immediate home situation. They also learn manipulative skills in playing with the various constructional toys, bricks, puzzles etc and stimulus may be found for their creative powers in crayoning and pasting materials, dough and sand play.

The house corner, dolls, shop and large cars and tractors provide opportunities for the children to play out their natural desire to imitate the world around them. We do attempt to make a real contribution towards a child's growth and development whilst at the same time providing a service to our local community.

In 1967 Houghton-le-Spring was a rapidly expanding area with the development of numerous new estates, housing young families creating a need for more facilities for the preschool child. To this end the then Curate's wife Mrs Jean Baker, gathered together a group of young mothers to form a committee. The first reaction of many people was one of puzzlement; hardly surprising as the National Association was still in its infancy. However, after discussion, the PCC approved the scheme, a bridging committee was formed, and full support given.

This support has continued without question to the present time and is always very much appreciated by all Playgroup and Toddler Group helpers.

We were unable to obtain a Local Authority grant so funds were raised in various ways. Some furniture and fittings were purchased for £1/50 shillings from the Council Nursery long since disappeared under the A690 roundabout. Plans for the renovation of the cloakroom were approved by the Borough Surveyor. The alterations were completed, we registered with the Ministry of Health in Durham, were inspected and approval to open granted. A cleaner was employed, and we were ready to open. One of the first events organised and which preceded the opening of the Playgroup was the first Parish Bonfire Party. This was primarily a social event, but the money raised was very useful to us.

On 13th November 1967 at 9.15 am we opened in the old Kepier Hall. Initially this was for 3 sessions each week manned by voluntary helpers with places for 25 children at each session. Membership of the Pre-school Playgroup Association was obtained, and we opened a bank account. In November 1967 the Bridging Committee drew up a Playgroup Charter. In January 1968 we held the first of many Parents' Evenings. We also formed a Tufty Club – brainchild of ROSPA and enjoyed an annual visit from a local Lollipop Man/Lady so the practical demonstration could be enjoyed. In June 1968 our first cleaner left and the following September Mrs Barrow arrived, was employed and wonderfully remained with us for 30 years.

The next 8 years was a steady continuation of our Playgroup life. The number of sessions increased to 5 and the increasing demand for places was such that we could only guarantee 3 sessions to each child in the 6 months immediately prior to school entry at 5. However, by 1976 a general fall in the birth rate, the opening of more playgroups in the area, but significantly the Local Authority Nursery doubling its intake by ending full day attendance, our numbers fell drastically.

Nationally there was a growing awareness of a need to extend the service to cover Mothers and Toddlers (under 3) – the population was on the move and young families were no longer necessarily within easy reach of family and close friends. It seemed a natural extension of the Playgroup to offer the facility to the mothers and their little ones (with a slight emphasis on the mothers) where they could meet over a cup of tea/coffee for a chat with others with similar problems to their own, or with the church helpers whilst the children played.

It was decided that this might be a solution to the lack of members, and it was. In April 1978 we replaced 2 Playgroup Sessions with Mother and Toddler groups and later added a third all of which continued to be well attended, meaning that in the region of 75 mothers and occasionally fathers with their child met at the Kepier each week.

Points of interest past and present incidental to the normal Playgroup and Mother and Toddler Group sessions

1. For several years, we opened Playgroup to the public during National Playgroup week and held open nights for parents and friends.
2. Education visits were made to farms, the park and our Church.
3. Annual summer outings to the beach, Saltwell Park, etc.
4. Visitors have included French school children on an exchange visit, and children from local schools on job creation schemes.
5. Constant provision of free places for deprived families.
6. Constant provision for children with a physical and/or learning disability.
7. Participation in funding of such Kepier projects as hall floor renewal, hall decoration, damp course to cloakroom, laying of tarmac and fencing to outside play area and car park resurfacing.
8. Constant participation on local PPA Branch activities.
9. Almost all helpers initially attended a Playgroup Leader's Course.
10. All helpers registered with the Local Authority. ...Continued overleaf
11. Annual Carol Service and Christmas Party. All children brought a small gift to the service to be passed on to the local Children's Home.
12. Annual visit from a photographer.
13. Organising of Fancy-Dress Parade and Children's Corner for Summer Fayres.
14. Jumble Sales and raffles for special events or when funds were low.
15. 2004 – all helpers require CRB registration (now DBS).

In 1996 the decision was taken to close the Playgroup sessions. Although still extremely successful, difficulties in finding qualified helpers and the constraints placed upon us by regulations including the infamous and short-lived voucher scheme made our position impossible. The Playgroup sessions were entirely replaced by 4 Mother and Toddler Groups and so we continued.

During our 50+ years we have survived the building of St Michal's Hall, replacement of the heating system, relaying of the hall floor, building of new storage space and more, but survive we have. Safeguarding, our latest challenge is now part of everyday life; even more so when dealing with children. So, CCTV cameras have been placed inside the buildings and throughout the Church grounds. A simple but effective 'locked door system' has been introduced which can only be operated by an adult. This was necessary because despite all carers being responsible for their own children (rules of the group) a little one would occasionally make their escape. We feel now that the Kepier is hopefully a safe environment for the Toddlers and are very grateful to the Kepier Management for all their support in facilitating the improvements.

I guess that part of our appeal for both staff and visitors was our stability and constancy. We were always there, and everyone made welcome. Our 'Kepier Special' coffee was always available with tea, orange and biscuits, and the chairs, tables, toys and games were out

in readiness. We partied at Christmas and enjoyed chocolate eggs at Easter and each year helped to swell Church funds by running a 'pre-loved' toy stall kindly contributed to by our carers as they clear out ready for Christmas.

So, as we celebrate the years of service, we reflect that almost 200 volunteers (male and female) have served as helpers, looking after the several thousand children that have passed through our hands, many of whom went on to bring their own children to join us. We have been so fortunate in having dedicated volunteers overseen by hardworking co-ordinators, who have week by week, month by month and in quite a few cases, year by year, given of their time and talents to enable us to continue.

The end of an era? Yes, but hopefully not the end of a Toddler Group at the Kepier. Discussions with St Michal's Church, other groups, parents and carers are in progress to see if a way forward can be found to allow continuation in some form. As they say, 'watch this space'. So, we are where we are – remember without Covid we would still be functioning. An enormous THANK YOU to our Church, the Kepier, all the helpers and last but not least our Toddler families for the last amazing 54 years.

"A JOB WELL DONE"

Anne Goodman

***Post Script from the Rector:** We were delighted in October to hold a Service of Thanksgiving for our Toddlers Group in church and to celebrate together and before God all that has been achieved through the Group for the people of Houghton. At the service, I was pleased to be able, in a small way, to say thankyou to our volunteer leaders for their dedication and commitment over the years. We are really excited that, at time of writing, we are relaunching our St Michael's Toddler group under the management of our Space4 Community project with many of our previous volunteers still being able to help out at the group!*

Space4 Community Project

Where we have been

Space4 serves to create a place where community can flourish across Houghton-le-Spring. Last year, as our previous annual report mentioned, we faced great challenges to our goal of continually shining a light of hope and offering security to those in our patch. That said, through the dedication and commitment of our community; kind donations from members of the public; and additional corporate sponsorship we were able to continually operate as a little oasis in the Coalfields of Sunderland!

Perhaps most celebratory; between July and December last year we served 1015 people through emergency food-relief via food-parcels – with many receiving a delivery service. What would normally be our daily drop-in provision transitioned online to serve as a contact point for fostering friendships and community. Through new relationships and working in partnership we were even able to offer a three course Christmas Day Meal – without charge, to anyone that wanted to join us. Truly a remarkable feat!

Where we are now

God willing, the lockdowns and restrictions are all behind us. Our Daily-Drop in has returned to in-person provision operating six times a week. At time of writing, each we are seeing monthly visitor footfall of 546 people! Our bespoke groups, such as Wednesday crafts, have returned with vigour as we seek to most effectively fill the Space4 Hub diary. We are beginning to launch workshops to encourage us all in maintaining our own mental health and we look forward to free cookery classes in the future. External organisations such as AGEUK and Sharp now use our Space4 Hub as a client contact point.

While we still, and will always, provide free-emergency food for those in our community we have also been able to pilot our community store. Here, you are invited to come browse our shelves and take any 10 items for a suggested donation. It is a pay-what-you-can pay-what-you-feel service. So far, since our November inception to time of writing, 715 people have benefited from this service which coincides as the venue for our returning uniform shop. We have even gone as far as to develop our own community cook-book and recipe cards! A remaining challenge has been re-engaging with children after the pandemic. Fortunately, our Tuesday Treat event is an after-school club with meal and activity provided where we hope to have upwards of 50 attendees each week.

Where we are going

Soon we will re-launch the historically successful St Michael's Toddler group at Keiper Hall. We hope to continually grow in size across our project and get back to activities that were once so normal – such as trips away to see the wonders of the North East.

In summary, there is so much happiness, health and well-being across Space4.

Can I encourage you to pop-down to our Hub or Community Store and see for yourself.

Got a spare hour a week? Why not consider joining the team.

Daniel Alcock, Operations Manager.