



St John's Hensingham
Life and Ministry

ANNUAL REPORTS

17th May 2021

Introduction

Dear St John's family members,

It's only seven months since our last annual report—and not a lot has happened in between! Actually, that's not true. But much of what has happened is not really reportable, at least not in a report like this.

God has not been idle, and we trust Jesus's promise that he is always at work as his Father is always at work (John 5:17). They work around us, amongst us and in us through the Holy Spirit. We are indeed the most privileged people on earth—along with all who trust in Jesus.

But often we can't quantify and calculate and statistify (is that a word?) what the Spirit is doing.

So while we say that the Covid-19 pandemic has curtailed many of our activities, all we are saying is that the Lord has done more of his work unobserved and without our churchly input than we thought he did last year.

Please note that these reports were written around February and March when lock-down was still in full force; I have taken the liberty of editing the reports.

You will notice a number of gaps in this document. I suggest you read this alongside the previous one (12th October 2020). In that way you will get a fuller picture of the whole of our Covid-19 season at St John's up to this point.

Fergus Pearson

REACH OUT

The first of the three objectives in our vision:

We want to create opportunities to invite everyone to turn to Christ and put their trust in him for salvation.

We want to encourage each other, as St John's members, to live evangelistically in all our networks.

The reports in this section have an ultimate focus on unbelievers hearing the gospel and being called to repent and believe.

CAP Whitehaven



First of all I would like to say we have a great and growing group of people working with CAP. They are dedicated and are connecting well with each other. Eleven of our team attended 2021's CAP national United Conference, held this year on zoom. We were introduced to Paula Stringer who has taken over from CAP's founder, John Kirkby. The conference was a great help in making our team feel more connected with CAP head office and its ethos.

The stream of incoming new clients is extremely quiet. This is probably due in part to the government pandemic arrangements which have taken the pressure off people in debt. But the floodgates will probably open again soon, and we want to be ready.

We are stepping up our promotion of CAP locally. I had a successful zoom meeting with people at the DWP/ job centre plus who are beginning to understand

who we are and will support us where they can in the future.

We have received funding from the Cumbria Community Foundation (shared with Carlisle and Penrith CAP) to take on a new debt coach (1 day a week). St John's is now working on the paperwork to enable this post so we can begin to advertise.

Many things are being put in place through a number of people and their teams.

- Mildred and the blessings team (see the separate Fareshare report) offer loving care along with food to clients
- Pauline Campbell is 'retiring' as the CAP money coach, and Pat Smith has stepped into her shoes, soon to run her first course
- Mel Turner is heading up our social team and is planning events online for our clients
- Phil Sisson is setting up Kick Start—different areas of support offered by CAP head office for our CAP clients
- Phill Mayhew is our new prayer co-ordinator, hoping to encourage more people to attend our prayer meetings. Prayer is at the forefront, and key to all we do at CAP
- Julian Berkeley is continuing to be very successful at securing funding
- Phil Sisson has started a five-week event through the Workers Educational Association to help connect clients and draw them out of isolation. The first evening has gone really well
- Jackie Wilkinson is developing our connectivity with churches and in the community. We are now on Whitehaven Appsolutely. Download the app!

Let me mention two special highlights.

In October 2020 the High Sheriff of Cumbria, Julie Barton, along with representatives from the Cumbria Community Foundation, came to meet our team (and the centre managers from Carlisle and Penrith). It was a wonderful opportunity to show an all-round snapshot of who we are and what we do. Julie Routledge from the DWP spoke highly of our services. Two clients, who had become debt-free, were also there and spoke about how life had changed for them through the love and support offered from the CAP Whitehaven team. This ultimately led to a prestigious award for CAP Whitehaven from the High Sheriff (there will be a report out shortly).

Our Christmas 2020 Ladies' Celebration (online) was a great success. Food was delivered to CAP clients before the event. There was a quiz, with fund and prizes, and Jema Chan shared her very touching testimony. Pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to speak to all those who attended.

A massive thank you to people who continue to help financially with donations and CAP money jars. I can't tell you how much it is appreciated.

I have been amazed this year at how many people have connected to CAP and looked at their Christian lives and have decided to use Christians Against Poverty as their platform in reaching out. We will be ready when clients return!

Jonathan Berry

CAP Fareshare

During 2020–2021 we have continued to support eleven homes with fareshare food. These vary from single people to large families—a total of 38 people.



As the first lockdown loomed in March 2020 a number of volunteers realised they were themselves vulnerable and so couldn't continue. This was also the time of panic-buying when we all saw pictures of empty shelves in the supermarkets. We feared we would not get adequate supplies and so made the difficult decision to suspend the service.

We then set about looking for what else we could do to support our clients and were able to offer food from

Northlakes Foodbank for three weeks through virtual vouchers.

During this time we heard of the Copeland Covid–19 response team which was providing food to 170 homes each week and we were able to refer our eleven families to this service. The food was provided by fareshare and distributed to the homes by volunteers, many of whom were Copeland workers unable to do their own jobs. I think funding for this came from Sellafeld contractors.

When many of these volunteers returned to work in July 2020 the Copeland service became a food pantry. This was when we returned to our usual fareshare system.

We are pleased to have been able to stay in regular contact with these families, to keep providing food for them, and to help provide other methods of social contact.

We pray for the time when this situation is resolved we will be ready to support CAP as we see new clients come on board.

Mildred Linstead

Cleator Moor church plant

Time is short, the gospel is sweet, and we want to see all people brought into Jesus's church. How do we reach the lost in a new town with the Gospel? Plant a church!

We've continued to meet over the last year to grow in faith over God's word, and to pray over Cleator Moor and the people here. The pandemic has impacted us in that we have had less opportunity to get involved in the community. We sent a little Christmas card to some neighbours and continue to hold them in prayer.

I have continued my study with Union School of Theology and I'm in my last semester in theological training which has equipped me well for the work ahead.

We are now a team of eight (nine if you include little Daniel!), with a little movement of people in and out. And things are beginning to take shape in other ways:

- We have recently received confirmation of a some funding from Union, and possibly future funding too.
- We are going down the road of being a church plant in connection with the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches. FIEC will provide support, alongside St Johns, and put us in a network of gospel-centred churches both locally and across the country.
- We've got a little website going to give a sense of our vision and aims—have a look! (temporary address: <https://joepearson7.wixsite.com/website>)
- We're going into a new set of evenings on 'Church Plant Equipping.'
- I have been a little more proactive in connecting with other church leaders, and gaining wisdom there.



Please pray for connecting with non-Christians, for the upcoming equipping sessions, and for each of us to be driven by Jesus and the joy of the gospel, despite the sometimes daunting task ahead.

Joe Pearson

Baptisms

We managed to sneak in a few baptisms between lockdowns at the end of last year. This included a particularly moving adult baptism service as well.

However, we now have 37 baptisms booked for the rest of the year—ten of them at St Andrew's. Each one is a real opportunity to talk with the families about how Jesus is the only reliable foundation in life. Please pray for these families, and for Si and me as we think through how to do good baptism preparation for so many people.

Pat and Paul Smith and Mel and Karl Turner act as vergers for baptisms. I'm very grateful for their commitment and care.

Fergus Pearson

Ann Christian and Serving in Mission



"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8–9

Despite having been in mission service for over thirty years, I have never experienced a year like 2020! I am not alone in this and in facing the reality of God's words in Isaiah. His purposes and plans are, most definitely, not ours!

My team was (obviously) one of the first to be affected by the coronavirus pandemic and everyone was evacuated to passport nations by mid-February 2020. It was assumed that this would be a short term absence until 'things settled down.' Although scattered across 21 time zones, the team kept in contact through weekly Zoom prayer and via email and messaging.

My role didn't change much apart from a lack of overseas travel—and having to leave the company of the office to work alone at home for many (too many!) months. I became an encourager and 'cheerleader' for those who were feeling more confused as the months passed. Ministry has continued online to some extent, as has language study and university teaching—but everyone longs to return. Ten adults (and four children) managed the almost impossible visa application/ month-long quarantine in October but the doors remain closed firmly to all others.

God's ways are, indeed, not our ways! Please pray Matthew 9:38 for us—the fields are white, the harvest workers are eager—but the way is closed.

Ann Christian

Christmas carol singing

Because the church building was not open and we weren't sure if we would be getting together to celebrate the birth of our Saviour Jesus, our thoughts turned towards taking the good news of Jesus to our parish.

It was decided we would sing in the midweek evenings from Wednesday 16th to Wednesday 23rd December, and on the Saturday afternoon. We aimed for an hour each time.

There was a really encouraging turnout: 47 adults, along with members of CYFA, 4 children and one baby!

They attended from one to six days each which was brilliant. Everyone was in good spirits and enjoyed themselves, some coming back for a second evening when they had only selected to sing once.

Leaflet-droppers made sure that every house on the streets where we sang received an evangelistic leaflet. It was lovely to see people coming to their doors and windows to listen to the singing—some even joining in. They were definitely smiling. A number of people thanked us for coming.

On the first evening, as soon as we had sung our last carol, it poured down! The second evening it poured down, and down, and down!! After that, all I can say is it did get better!

We chose a variety of streets around the parish from one end to the other, and Phill Mayhew provided maps, making things so much easier to organise. We covered well over 1,000 homes but there were many we didn't reach. That's for this Christmas!

Here are some things we learnt for Christmas 2021:

- knock on the door when putting the leaflet through the letterbox
- perhaps to produce our own leaflet about the good news of Jesus
- include with the leaflet our Christmas activities at church along with contact details, so that people know they are very welcome to come.
- consider carrying a small collection box as there were many people who came out with money to give us (there are pros and cons for this). The box of Quality Street someone handed round us was very welcome!
- think about singing during the daytime
- avoid going on a busy bus route!

I would like to thank everyone who came along. Hopefully for Christmas 2021 we'll see you along with others who couldn't make it this time

"The fields are white for harvest time. Look up and see".

Pat Smith

2

BUILD UP

The second of our three aims: We want to disciple everyone who turns to follow Jesus. A bare 'commitment' to Christ could end up being the second or third kind of soil in Jesus's parable of the sower (Mark 4).

Growing as disciples is vital: we cannot claim to be Christians unless we "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith..." (1 Timothy 6:11)

Children and Young People

All our children's and youth work at St John's has been affected by the pandemic. Parents have not been able to engage with other families. As a church we have not been able to run Tiny Tots or creche, HPs or Scramblers & Climbers. Evangelistic Football School plans had to be cancelled.

Thankfully Explorers, Pathfinders and CYFA restarted, under restrictions, when the third lockdown began to ease.

Please pray particularly for our work with young people and children as we continue, hopefully, to emerge from restrictions. We have a golden opportunity to think from the ground up and to do a significant re-view of youth and children's work. Si has



devised a questionnaire for all those who feel an interest in our children's and youth work. Why not fill it in here <https://forms.gle/SNktXZdVDGeoErkn9>

Sunday School Unscripted was invented on the hoof (as the title suggests!) as we began our tentative exploration into doing services on youtube. We're very pleased now to be able to bring families back into church and for the children to watch these weekly videos together in the hall—'Sunday School Unscripted On Site.' Matthew Last and his team continue to produce consistently good bible teaching videos for our children. We have much to thank them for.

Fergus Pearson

Explorers

7–11 year olds meeting on Tuesday evenings



During lockdown the meeting time for Explorers has been shortened, from 6.10 until 6.50pm over Zoom. There are five adults who help to direct the meeting: Stan Marsland, Paul Cartmell, Simon Walker, Jonathan Lucas and Dawyn Sawyer.

Nine children attend regularly, with a few others who attend irregularly—once or twice only. The theme for this year is 'Fruit of the Spirit' with a look at many people in the Bible and the emotions depicted in their stories. For three weeks we looked at positive characters who followed God, and for another three weeks we looked at persons who did not obey God and the consequences of their behaviour.

Positive themes have included love, joy, peace, hope, faithfulness and patience. Negative emotions discussed have been discouragement, coveting, anger, fear and lack of mercy. It is our hope that the children will see that they can trust God with the struggles they are experiencing, and find hope and peace in him.

In early December the Explorers were able to record a Christmas play, with costumes, when we could meet at church. This production was shown during the Christmas programme at church and enjoyed by all. The children coloured and signed Christmas cards

that were delivered to older members of St John's.

Items for praise:

- praise that many children are able to attend the weekly meeting regularly
- praise for faithful leaders who oversee the children's meetings
- praise for God's word that inspires the lessons

Items for prayer:

- pray for creative ways to encourage other children to join the meetings
- pray for God's words to penetrate deeply into the hearts of the children and leaders
- pray for ways to create games and activities that support the lessons weekly

Dawyn Sawyer

Pathfinders

11–15 year olds meeting on Tuesday evenings

Like everything else, this year has been a totally different year in Pathfinders. But we have adapted and still stayed true to our values of teaching the gospel and having fun and games and fellowship together.

During the first phase of lockdown we had a break from Pathfinders—as leaders we weren't quite sure how best to do a youth group for that age group online. Once we realised the lockdown wasn't going to be as short as first anticipated we were doubtful about how it would work on Zoom, but we were delighted when six turned up. We spent the first sessions catching up with how things were going with the young people. Our plan was to do it fortnightly, and for 30 minutes, as we thought it would be hard to keep concentration for any longer. At the time of writing we are now meeting weekly on Zoom and meeting for an hour.

We can honestly say that doing a youth group for 11–14 year olds online, and making it interactive and fun—especially as we are learning on the job— isn't the easiest.

Hoping we could meet in the hall in September, even with social distancing, we were looking forward to being able to socialise, have discussions together during talks, and most of all to be able to play games together. Creating social-distancing games was definitely something new for all the leaders to adapt to, but we wanted to make sure they were as competitive and energetic as always.

The leaders had prayed hard for the new year opening in September. A big number had gone up to CYFA during the summer and we weren't sure how many were going to join

us from Explorers as we hadn't had the same contact we would have normally had. We were delighted to have eight turn up on that first night, and that the Explorers felt very much at home. A real answer to prayer.

Pray for us as we continue to meet each week. We currently have five young people that are coming faithfully each week on Zoom. Pray that the message will continue to be brought clearly and interactively in these times.

Dave Baxter, Jonathan Blyth, Caitlin Holburt & Rachel Smye



CYFA

15–18 year olds meeting on Sunday evenings

CYFA has been happening online for much of the time that the Covid–19 crisis has been happening. We did have a window of opportunity in summer 2020 to meet outside when rules allowed it. We also met in the building between lockdowns for a few sessions, with all of the various precautions.

My reflections are that the times we were able to meet on site were particularly good, even when we had to wear masks. God was kind to us and seemed to give us an extra blessing in terms of the quality of fellowship. We were able to forget that we were wearing masks and enjoy things. We went through Galatians and were encouraged that we must not add to the gospel of Jesus. The gospel of Jesus for salvation through his life, death, resurrection and glorious ascension are not something we ever move on from. After this we have been looking at God's Big Picture and watching videos by Vaughan Roberts to get a Bible overview in place.

Online sessions have been fun too but, as with the other groups, this has reduced the number of young people able or willing to be involved. For some young people the

thought of zoom in addition to zoom school lessons is proving too much. But for those who do come we have had good times and there has been a faithful small group of five or six.

The leaders have really stepped up to the new challenges we have faced and have run everything during my time on leave. They are Philippa Canfield, Matthew Last, Ben Naylor and John Stoker. Such a team means that we have the potential to expand and reach more young people if the Lord has that in his plan. We will need a new female leader in September, however, once Phil moves away to begin her new job.

Please pray that we would trust the Lord during these times and seek him to know what his plans are for the future.

Si Walker

Work in schools

Partnership in the Gospel: Links between the local schools and the church

St John's Church has continued its support for NISCU (Northern-Inter Schools Christian Union) in what has been a different year within the schools.

As you will be aware, most schools closed to visitors in March 2020, which is still the case as I write this report. Children and young people have had to adapt to 'class bubbles' and long periods of remote learning. NISCU has also had to adapt to work in new ways,



getting used to the new technology that is available. One of the main ways was recording assemblies and lessons onto video and uploading these to the NISCU YouTube site, making them available for the schools to use. It's great to be able to say that these are now accessible, as resource packs, for more schools and organisations

than could have been visited over the period. For example, the links to the Christmas video assemblies were sent to over 80 schools.

The team has changed over the last year as Lynn and Alex have moved on to new jobs, leaving a gap which we are looking to fill when the opportunity arises. Ruth Smith and the three puppet teams have continued to keep the work going and we are thankful for their time and efforts.

We would ask you to continue to pray for the work of NISCU, and the schools themselves—especially our local schools—in these challenging times, that God would sustain and give them strength. Are there ways we, as a church or as individuals, can be involved and support them when they return to the new normal—for example as governors, teachers, teaching assistants, or in praying for a local school?

Neil Baxter (NISCU Support Team)

Ministry among Adults

Living Room

The past year in Living Room has been a difficult one with learning to adapt to the new online way of doing things. Much of what we took for granted has stopped—the Living Room has been replaced by the Living Zoom!

Being able to share a meal together after church, to meet up in a large group, and even to meet in an actual living room to study the Bible has all had to stop. But we have adapted and changed to make the most of what we are able to do.

Over the Summer we split up into groups of six, allowing us to meet in back gardens to study the Bible together in

smaller groups—a real blessing with the relaxing of some of the rules after months on Zoom by that point. The smaller groups worked so well that we've kept them going even now when we are back onto Zoom.

It is a shame, though, that with the smaller groups we don't see the wider group so often, so we have been enjoying social activities together—movies, quizzes and games nights, all done over Zoom.

Through our studies in Living Room we have covered a fairly wide range of topics over the past year. During the Summer we went through the 'God's Big Picture' Bible overview course, looking at the big story of the Bible and how it all leads to Christ. Then before Christmas we spent several months going through Ephesians together—a real encouragement for us all to understand how great the church is. Even when it is apart and unable to meet it is still the body of Christ in whom we are being built up and growing, and it is through this that God has decided to make his manifold wisdom known—even through us at St John's!



Since Christmas we decided to try and study Nehemiah together. After initially regretting it, we have now come to love this book and the very real (and sometimes surprisingly fitting) application it has for us today. As we see Nehemiah and the people of God building the walls of Jerusalem we too are engaged in a great building project—the church (what a book to follow on from Ephesians!). As we see the difficulties, crises and joys of the work in Nehemiah we can see the same too in our own day. The walls were built despite intense opposition, and so we are reminded that God will build his church too. Not even Covid-19 can stop it.

'I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.' Matthew 16:1

Ben Naylor

Home groups

The coronavirus pandemic has been both a challenge and an opportunity for our house groups. Who would have imagined a year ago that six of our home groups would have successfully moved on-line!

Those groups were able to overcome technological barriers and continue to run over Zoom—with a majority of members managing to join the meetings this way. In fact, an opportunity arising from this change was the chance for new members to join groups that would have been very crowded in someone's living room, and allowed those who would not usually be able to leave home because of child-care commitments to join too, after little ones had gone to bed!

Another opportunity has been the freedom groups have had to explore many different types of resources, and two of our groups have members taking turns to read a chapter or section of the Bible and discuss it together, rather than using study books. They have found this to be very rewarding.

Three of our groups have struggled to meet because not everyone has had access to suitable technology, but group leaders have regularly checked in with group members by phone to offer support and prayer.

So, homegroups have managed to continue to support and grow their members despite the pandemic. Only one group tried meeting outside in groups of six when permitted (and when weather allowed!)—and all are looking forward to the opportunity to meet again in person when lockdowns end.

Heather Naylor

Chinese Fellowship

Since April 2020 we have been using Zoom for our bi-weekly Fellowship meeting. We finished the study of Hosea at the end of September and then started on 1 & 2 Timothy. We also meet up to pray on a monthly basis, particularly for the current pandemic situation which has impacted every aspect of life.

Through regular meetings we continue to encourage and edify one another. There has been a growing interest in the Book of Revelation, so we will have a go at it after the study of 2 Timothy.

Many of us also make use of the time by

watching sermons and teachings on video in our Chinese language. It is a delight to realise that, despite the difficult and strange time that the whole world is facing, spiritual growth is still possible. Indeed, we feel very grateful that, as God's children, we can find strength, grace and wisdom in him to persevere through undesirable circumstances.

We of course are conscious that Christians can still feel low, if not depressed, during these trying times. As most of our members originate from Hong Kong we have been feeling very upset by the political and societal upheaval there—a place where we were born and brought up, and which we once called home.

We have been praying for Christians in Hong Kong that they will continue to be ambassadors for Christ, to bring joy, peace, hope, love and forgiveness where there is a lack of it.

Even though the church has been closed most of the time, summaries of the Sunday sermons still gets translated and circulated amongst the Fellowship. So, preachers, be encouraged, you still nurture us through your teachings, and we are still one in Christ!

We missed our big Chinese New Year celebration event this year for obvious reasons. However, we had a small-scale virtual one, which was unexpectedly very enjoyable—full of fun and laughter. We enjoyed our chit-chatting (which is Chinese people's strength!)

華人團契 ~ 神在那裡栽種你，你就在那裡開花結果

我們是一群主要來自香港的華人基督徒。每一個成員都有自己的故事 - 我們的掙扎，我們如何經歷上帝的救恩、保守和供應。主耶穌犧牲的大愛把我們連繫在一起，在當中學習彼此關顧。隔週的星期六我們在家中舉行大概兩小時的聚會，以自己的語言研讀神的話語和互相建立。我們都認知基督徒必須要作門徒的重要性，一個真正重生得救的信徒應該在生活中體現出基督美好的素質和品格，力求按照聖經的教導生活。

我們熱衷於宣揚福音，並把握機會幫助其他中國人在信仰方面的追求。

歡迎信徒和非信徒參加。

神恩浩大

and played some games. We received some positive feedback from a few non-Christian friends—that they had thoroughly enjoyed it and asked if we could organise another ‘gathering’ on our Chinese Valentine’s Day (which is the fifteenth day in the Lunar Year).

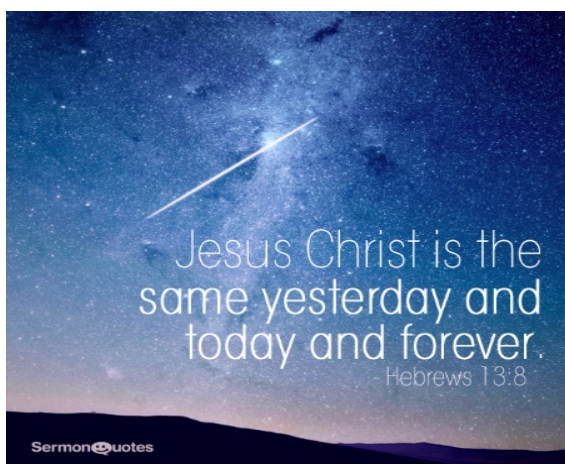
Also, we have a dream. We hope to hold a gospel and social event after the lockdown rules are lifted. Let us all pray about it, and may God’s will be done.

Jema Chan

Pastoral visiting team

Since writing this report last year, many things have changed.

The main change for the visiting team is that we have been unable to visit people in their own homes. We have, however, been able to contact people by phone and make



occasional socially-distanced doorstep visits to drop off items and take correspondence from St John’s, which has been a privilege.

Unfortunately, another area that has been impacted by the pandemic has been our visits with communion to individuals and to care homes. We will resume this service when government guidelines allow us.

We are aware that many members of our church contact others in the church family. This will have been especially helpful during this difficult time. If you know anyone, or know of anyone, who would appreciate a friendly telephone chat, then do get in touch with us. We would be more than happy to make contact. Likewise, if you would like to become a member of the pastoral visiting team—we would love to hear from you!

So, although many things have changed in this last year, one thing has remained constant, and that is our dependence on our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” Hebrews 13:8

Judith Hodgson, Enid Starkey, Yvonne Owen, Kay Cartmell & Susan Baxter

Ladies' virtual afternoon tea

We had a ladies' virtual afternoon tea on 12th December 2020. The topic was 'The need to rest.' Alison Bragg gave a very interesting talk. We had a fun afternoon with virtual socialising. We started with a quiz and ended having an afternoon tea and breaking into rooms for smaller chat groups.

Mel Turner

3

Bear Fruit

The third of our three objectives:

We want to enable every disciple to bear fruit in their lives
—fruit that brings glory to God.

We want to provide opportunities and training to encourage each
person to serve the Lord
both in the church and perhaps especially
in the world so that people may see Christians
in action "and glorify our Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16)
by turning to put their trust in him.

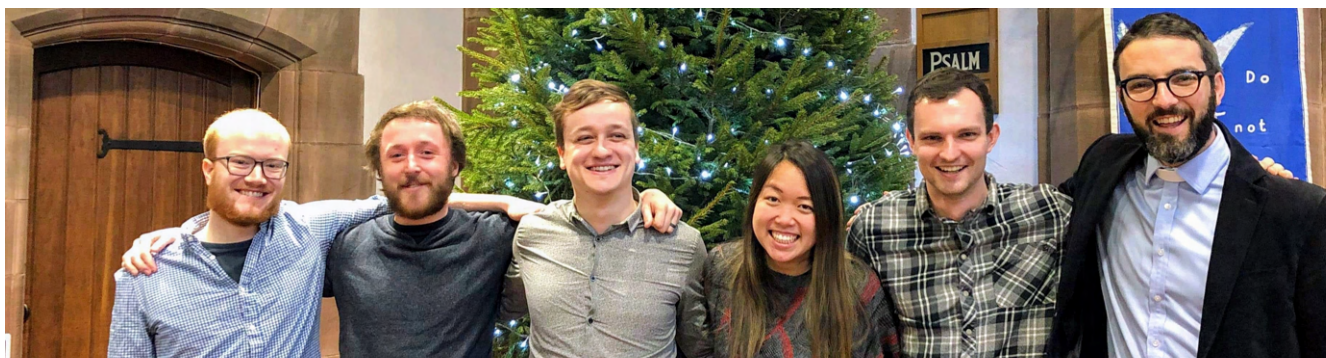
Church Ministry Apprenticeship

Matthew Last is our Ministry Apprenticeship in 2020–2021

It's been about six months since I took over from Ben and it's safe to say that this time has been very different compared to a normal apprentice's year, for reasons we are all familiar with.

Since nearly the first day I've been helping out with Sunday School Unscripted by creating talks and activities and, starting earlier this year, organising a small group of people

to help create the videos. On average, we've had about 30 views for each Sunday School Unscripted video. This may seem small in Youtube terms, but if we had that many families each week for Sunday school in real life I'm sure we'd be thrilled.



All our previous apprentices (except Matthew!), with Si.

Various tech-based roles have had increased importance this year, such as getting the booking system for church up and running, managing large scale Zoom calls, and helping with the new church website. Said website is near completion and although progress has been slow it has had some good feedback and should be online soon.

Despite the restrictions, I've experienced firsthand a wide array of the roles and duties taken up by those working at a church like St. John's, from unlocking for a service to writing and delivering a sermon—something that seemed daunting at the start of this year. In all, the education side of things has gone well, with invaluable mentoring and tutoring from many members of the church family and very in-depth learning from the weekly NWGP course. Though mostly via Zoom so far, the course has been a great way of grappling with some deep and interesting subjects around the Bible and ministry.

Looking back, I am grateful for what God has been doing in me this year, helping me to grow and learn more about how I can use the gifts I have to help glorify his name. I am also very thankful for the welcome and continued support I have had from the congregation at St Johns. I am eager to see what the second half of the apprenticeship holds.

Matthew Last

East Whitehaven Mission Community

We are in a formal partnership with St Andrew's, Mirehouse and St Bridget's, Moresby

During the pandemic there has been a little bit more shared ministry in the mission community. Paul Kerry, the rector at St Bridget's, has been using Facebook Live and has invited Si and me on occasions to preach. Members from St Bridget's and St Andrew's have joined us for our weekly Zoom Sunday evening prayer meeting. Some from St John's have attended Paul's weekday Facebook Bible readings. It feels as if there is a good sense of belonging together and of encour-

aging each other through difficult times. When the opportunity comes it will be good to hold another Mission Community leaders' meeting to reflection together on our experiences.

Our three churches are united in having the same gospel heart and vision, and we are very grateful for Paul Kerry as he gives a lead to our Mission Community.

Fergus Pearson

Union School of Theology



Joe Pearson, James Fitch and the 'lead mentors' Fergus and Si kept meeting weekly in the church lounge for as long as they were allowed. Latterly the meetings have been by Zoom—all except for one. We carefully studied the weather forecasts and decided to meet in our garden. This worked well with thick gloves and plenty

of layers until the hail and blustery rain and a runaway gazebo sent us dashing for cover in bricks and mortar.

The two year graduate diploma course is soon coming to completion with final essays and exams.

Just to remind you, we meet each Thursday to watch videoed lectures from the faculty at Union, in south Wales. Last year Mike Reeves was one of the lecturers, and this year we have been studying systematic theology under Robert Letham. The lectures and discussions are very stimulating and are related to church life and to our own Christian lives.

This year the subjects have been Hebrew Grammar, Systematic Theology, and Church & Mission.

Pray that James and Joe will finish well and will be able to let what they are learning filter into faithful and godly ministry for many years to come.



This course is a unique and excellent opportunity for people in Cumbria to do serious theological study at a fraction of the cost, but with all of the quality, of a residential theological education.

We are praying for new students to begin in September, but as yet we have no takers. Please pray for last minute entries!

Fergus Pearson

Safeguarding

Our parish safeguarding officers are Ian Ulyett and Kay Cartmell

Safer Recruitment and Training:

There are 57 people on my records who are currently in positions which require either DBS checks or safeguarding training. This number includes six individuals whose Leadership safeguarding training module is outstanding but the Covid situation has meant this training, which currently has to be face to face, is not available. A further seven individuals have outstanding Foundation level training requirements from last year. In addition, three people are behind in their Basic level safeguarding training—these same folk also need to undertake the Foundation level (i.e. they are part of the 7 listed previously)

During 2021 a further 19 people are due to refresh their Foundation level safeguarding training (training needs to be refreshed every three years).

How to access online safeguarding training:

The Basic and Foundation levels of safeguarding training are designed as online training courses and can be accessed at <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org>. If not already registered on the site you will need to register and set up an account first. Then select the course(s) you need to complete. After completion of the course(s) please forward a copy of your certificate of completion to me at safeguarding@stjohnshensingham.org.uk so that a copy can be printed out and kept in the file in the vestry.

DBS checks:

Five people will require to renew their DBS check during the coming year.

Safeguarding Statement:

The Parish of St John's has adopted the Church of England's policy *Promoting a Safer Church* that puts children, young people and vulnerable adults at the centre of our concerns, and we have adopted the safeguarding policy and guidelines agreed by the House of Bishops.

Ian Ulyett

Supporting Ministries

These ministries
can be seen as the trellis
that supports the vine.

Hensingham bellringers

When lockdown was announced I spent time preparing the Ellecombe chiming system which allows one or two people to operate the bells, all be it at a reduced volume. We are fortunate to have this facility and it also allows us to ring tunes.



Soo and I were able to access the church (still keeping to the rules) to check the building and to wind the clock. We used this as an opportunity to play hymn tunes at 12

o'clock each Sunday and before service when church was open. We also rang for Remembrance day. We know from several people that this was an encouragement to those that heard them. We stopped ringing when the clock stopped. It is now back in action, and we recommenced chiming at Easter.

Gordon Gray

St John's handbells

As with most groups, within church and without, the handbells didn't ring. It wasn't thought appropriate to start again after the first lockdown. So here we are, nearly twelve months later, and not a bell has been shaken—although Audrey, Gordon and Soo have continued, on line, in their other groups. We returned the bells to Mark, their owner, in the autumn as they were suffering from dampness in the cold vestry. We do hope to be back practising and performing for Christmas 2021.

Soo Gray

Church of England statutory meetings

Electoral roll and Parochial Church Council

The number on the church electoral roll is 191, down from 193 in 2020.

There were four regular meetings of the PCC during the year and two additional meetings. Since July 2020, and after approval of a Zoom policy, meetings were held via Zoom due to Covid-19 restrictions, with additional issues discussed and agreed via email where appropriate. This included approval for online Sunday services, live praise, prayer meetings, children's work, house groups, Living Room, Christianity Explored and the Discipleship course to continue via Zoom.

As well as the regular standing reports some of the items agreed or discussed were as follows:

- regular reviews regarding the re-opening of the church after each Covid-19 national lockdown, with risk assessments and social distancing compliance
- a continuation of the roll out of the vision document "Gospel DNA" including a church plant in Cleator Moor
- agreement that the PCC pursues an adverse possession application on the land behind the church on the basis that we have occupied and maintained the land for more than twelve years, and to continue discussions with a local builder who also has an interest in the development of the land
- agreement to propose three options for the development of the chancel which will remain on hold until after lockdown restrictions are lifted
- discussion of the diocesan strategy, and review of our parish offer for 2021

- approval of the next phase of developments at Keekle by the Keekle village hall committee
- approval of the safeguarding policy *Promoting a Safer Church*
- approval of ongoing commitment to an apprentice for 2021/2022, and the Union School of Theology course
- approval for ongoing maintenance work such as replacement of windows in the hall, kitchen, toilet and tower.

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the *Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016* (duty to have regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

Phil Sisson (PCC Secretary)

Extracts from last year's annual meetings

The Annual Vestry Meeting and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting were held on the 12th October 2020.

There were 39 people present. Andy Walkingshaw and Joyce Hewer were elected as church wardens. Our deanery synod representatives are Paul Smith, Helen Stoker and Nigel Gillson. There were eleven PCC members appointed with Stephen Jackson as ex-officio in his role as Reader. Thelma Toman was appointed auditor of the accounts for 2020.

The number on the electoral roll was 191, down from 193 in 2020.

Tim Naylor, St John's treasurer, presented the accounts for the year ending 31st December 2019 and answered questions. The income was positive with regular giving, marriages and CAP funding all increasing.



riages and CAP funding all increasing.

We are in discussion with the diocese about reducing our parish offer (the money St John's gives to the diocese each

year out of which clergy, including our vicar, but not our associate vicar, are paid). While maintaining our commitment to the diocese, the Our Gospel DNA document outlines where we feel we should invest our income, in particular our church plant aspirations in Cleator Moor, the associate vicar position, and potential chancel developments.

Our proportion of the Mission Community offer (the three parishes combine their parish offers) would be reduced to around £65K for 2021 which still, as a combined three-churches allocation, covers the costs of all three churches. However, due to Covid-19 restrictions our expenditure has been less than anticipated and further consideration could be made in 2021 to increase the offer if the situation allowed.

Fergus thanked Marian Brooks as she stepped down as church secretary after 47(!) years of service. He said that Marian had been invaluable to his being able to remain at St John's as vicar. Alison Marsland has taken over as church secretary.

Fergus also thanked Eileen Henry who has stepped down from her role in leading Sunday crèche and Tiny Tots. Eileen has loved and cared for many families over the years and has spoken often to them of Jesus.

Churchwardens' report

Writing at this time last year we couldn't have known what lay ahead for us all. But despite the difficulties, and in some cases great personal loss, God has remained good and faithful to his people.

We have been amazed at the way so many people have stepped up to provide teaching, music, prayer and support in new 'socially distanced' ways. New talents and gifts have emerged and been used to the glory of our God. Thank you to everyone for the innovation and plain hard work you have contributed in order to produce online services, adults' groups and young people's work. Some of the highlights for us have been Sunday morning live praise, the weekly prayer meeting, and the virtual Carols by Candlelight. We're sure that God has also been teaching us lessons in these areas that we may be able to carry forward into the future.

Thank you also to the re-opening group who carefully reviewed and put in place additional safety measures to allow physical services to take place.

It's now six years since we took up our roles as church wardens and, at that time, it was decided wardens would in future serve for a maximum of two consecutive three-year terms before stepping down. So as this is our final report, we would like to thank our predecessors Jim and Marian, our vicars and everyone who has supported us practically and in prayer.

As usual, and for our final time, we'd also like to say that the silver and ornaments are intact, the inventory and terriers are up to date and the building is secure.

Joyce Hewer and Andy Walkingshaw

