



St Bartholomew's Church  
Long Benton

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

&

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL  
CHURCH MEETING

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2026

12 pm

St Bartholomew's Church Hall

# ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2026

## AGENDA

1. To read the notice convening the meeting.
2. Opening Prayer
3. Apologies
4. To read and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2025
5. Matters arising
6. Church School Head Teacher's report
7. Election of Churchwardens
  - a. Nominations
    - i. Chris Gravell
    - ii. David Cowen
8. Any other business.

## MINUTES FROM THE MEETING IN 2025

The meeting was held on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2025 and was chaired by Fr Ben.

1. To read the notice convening the meeting:

The notice convening the meeting, having previously been displayed on the church notice board for the four Sundays preceding the meeting, was taken as read as proposed by Norman Shields and seconded by Pat Halliday and all were in favour.
2. The Meeting was opened with prayer.
3. Apologies for absence were received from Claire Francis, Anthony Francis, Tim Gittins, Lorraine Cuthbertson, Paul Cuthbertson, Catherine Ewles, Brian Ewles, Rosamund Glenn, Jen McCaffrey, Alyson Thomson, Chris Thomson, Ann Garnham, Graham Garnham and Eleanor Jobson.
4. The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2024, having previously been published on the St Bartholomew's website and hard copies distributed on request, were taken as read and approved by all as proposed by Les Hodson and seconded by Derek Brown.
5. Matters arising from Item 2 – None

6. The Head Teacher, Mr Restall, presented his annual report on St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School for 2024 to 2025.
  - a. Summary:
    - i. It had been a very busy, exhausting year. Mr Restall has been Head Teacher for 13 years and he greatly values the strong links between the school and St Bart's church. He thanked the congregation for their prayer support and for school visits.
    - ii. Early Years and reception classes are full.
    - iii. Football – St Bart's "did the double" – Top of the league and won the Cremona Cup.
    - iv. Some school families are struggling and finding life hard and they have to be encouraged to take parental responsibility.
    - v. School finances are stretched with so many children having special needs. Meeting these complex needs is a huge ongoing challenge.
    - vi. Mrs Whittacre, Deputy Head, is now fully recovered. She produced a very successful end of year show.
  - b. Matters Arising in response to questions.
    - i. A new RE syllabus has been introduced and at least 50% of the content has to be on Christianity.
    - ii. Attendance and lateness have slightly improved post covid and continues to be a national problem. It was suggested that the school consider staggered start and finish times. Mr Restall explained that the school cannot afford the additional staffing costs.
    - iii. The breakfast club is very popular and has now run for three years. The school cannot afford to offer a completely free breakfast club.
    - iv. Fr. Mark offered to arrange, at a future date, a Bubble Church session at the school.
  - c. On behalf of the congregation, Fr Ben thanked Mr Restall for his report and thanked him and his staff for all their work.
  
7. Election of Churchwardens. Nominations were sought and Graham Garnham nominated David Cowen for re-election and Colin Thomson seconded this. Christina Gravel was nominated for re-election by Colin Thomson and this was seconded by Alyson Thomson. There being no other nominations both were appointed to serve as Churchwardens for 2025 to 2026 as proposed by Pat Halliday and seconded by Norman Shields and all were in favour.  
  
Fr Ben proposed a vote of thanks to David Cowen and Christina Gravel for their services as Wardens for 2023-24.
  
8. There being no other business the meeting closed at 12.30 p.m.

# ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING 2026

## AGENDA

1. To read the notice convening the meeting
2. Apologies
3. To read and confirm the minutes of meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2025
4. Matters arising
5. Annual reports and Matters arising
6. Announcement of appointment of Churchwardens
7. Election of four members to the Parochial Church Council
8. Election of three members to Newcastle East Deanery Synod
9. Appointment of Independent Examiner
10. Any other business

# MINUTES FROM THE MEETING IN 2025

The meeting was held on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2025 and was chaired by Fr Ben.

1. To read the notice convening the meeting:  
The notice convening the meeting, having been displayed in the Church porch for the four Sundays preceding the meeting, was taken as read as proposed by Derek Brown and seconded by Les Hodson and all were in favour.
2. Apologies for absence were received from: Claire Francis, Anthony Francis, Tim Gittins, Lorraine Cuthbertson, Paul Cuthbertson, Catherine Ewles, Brian Ewles, Rosamund Glenn, Jen McCaffrey, Alyson Thomson, Chris Thomson, Ann Garnham, Graham Garnham and Eleanor Jobson.
3. The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 23rd April 2023, having previously been published on the St Bartholomew's website and hard copies distributed on request, were taken as read and approved by all as proposed by Pat Halliday and seconded by Catherine Ewles.
4. Matters arising – None.
5. Annual reports and Matters arising
  - a. PCC Secretary's Report – Colin Thomson – None
  - b. Churchwardens' Report – Christina Gravell and David Cowen – None
  - c. Buildings and Fabric Report – Christina Gravell and David Cowen – None
  - d. Safeguarding Report – Sally Robertson and Helen Whitfield
    - i. Sally thanked Helen Whitfield for her assistance and guidance.
    - ii. Fr Ben expressed the congregation's thanks to Sally and Helen for the huge amount of work they put into keeping abreast of the ever-increasing safeguarding requirements.
  - e. Deanery Synod Report – Jennifer Brown. Les Hodson and Jennifer Shields – None
  - f. Treasurers' Report – Claire and Anthony Francis.
    - i. Fr Ben gave a summary of the report including that we have agreed a 5% increase in the Parish Share for 2025.
    - ii. Fr Ben thanked Claire and Anthony and also thanked Jen and Norman Shields for counting the cash giving.
    - iii. Fr Ben encouraged the use of the Parish Giving Scheme.
  - g. Church Groups and Activity Reports
    - i. Parish Breakfast – Ann Luckley – None
    - ii. Baptism – Chris Gravell – None
    - iii. Church Hall – Loise Barnfather – None
    - iv. Creche – Fiona Gray – None

- v. Altar Servers – Philip Emmerson – None
  - vi. Craft Group – Ann Luckley – None
  - vii. Park View Music Group – Sally Robertson – None
  - viii. Pastoral Committee – Helen Whitfield – Fr Ben thanked all pastoral visitors and those who minister home communion.
  - ix. Mothers’ Union – Alyson Thomson – None
  - x. Art Group – Frances Atkinson – None
  - xi. Flower Fellowship – Pat Black – None
  - xii. Choir and Music – Christopher Haresnape – None
  - xiii. Bubble Church – Fr Mark Oliver – None
  - xiv. St Bart’s Junior Church – Clare Mears – Clare added that a register is completed each week and that there is a very wide age range. It is hoped, with more leaders, to provide more age-appropriate teaching.
  - xv. Working Party- Graham Garnham – none
  - xvi. Evergreens Care Home – Fr Mark Oliver – Fr Mark added that there is a service on the last Sunday of each month and invited everyone to attend and socialise.
  - xvii. Fairtrade Stall – Sheena and Jon Hanes – None.
- h. Vicar’s Report – Fr Ben
- i. Fr Ben reported that keeping the church doors open has proved to be very successful and that people are visiting every day.
  - ii. Growth – The congregation is growing with more regular attenders; he showed a graph displaying the gradual rise.
  - iii. Mission – Lots of work is still to be done on our church’s mission although newcomers have commented that the “welcome” is very good.
  - iv. Sustainability – He stressed that shared responsibility is needed – not depending on just a few people – for future proofing.
  - v. Basement Project – Work is in progress to gain control of the project. Janet Hunter is now Chair of Trustees. The Trustees are working closely with the Longbenton Youth Project.
  - vi. St Mary Magdalene – Fr Ben is to be Priest in Charge for a period of five years. There will be a Community Missioner Role to operate over both parishes.
  - vii. Church Life – Fr Ben wants now to be the good old days. He wants to re-introduce what was good in the past. Our unique selling point is that St Bart’s is a happy church.
- i. Electoral Roll Officer’s Report. Eleanor Jobson reported that: The number on the roll at the time of the APCM in 2024 was 152 and the number on the roll is now 138.
- j. All reports, including the Financial Statements, were approved by the meeting as proposed by Pat Halliday and seconded by Louise Barnfather.

6. Announcement of Appointment of Churchwardens – Fr Ben announced that David Cowen and Christina Gravell had been appointed to serve as Churchwardens for 2025 – 2026.
7. Elections to the PCC – Colin Thomson announced that the terms of office of Graham Garnham, Pat Halliday and Fred Wilson end at the end of this meeting and that up to five new representatives were to be elected to serve for three years. The following nominations were received:

<b>Nominee</b>	<b>Proposed by</b>	<b>Seconded by</b>
Graham Garnham	Sally Robertson	Colin Thomson
Pat Halliday	Colin Thomson	Viv Wilson
Sally Robertson	David Cowen	Pat Halliday
Claire Francis	Alyson Thomson	Viv Wilson
Anthony Francis	Viv Wilson	Alyson Thomson

There being no other nominations all five were elected to serve for three years.

8. Appointment of Independent Financial Examiners
  - a. Naomi and Andy Lowe were re-appointed as proposed by Louise Barnfather and seconded by Helen Whitfield and all were in agreement.
9. Any other business –
  - a. Fr Ben thanked Colin Thomson for his work as Honorary Secretary and Claire and Anthony Francis for their work as Honorary Treasurers and Fr Fraser Charlton and Fr Mark Oliver for their service to St Bartholomew’s as Associate Priests.
  - b. On behalf of the congregation, Colin Thomson proposed a vote of thanks to Fr. Ben for his work and this was heartily endorsed by all.
10. There being no other items of business, the meeting closed with The Grace at 1.03 pm.

# 2026 REPORTS

## CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

This year's report is a very positive one, with encouraging signs of growth and renewal across our church community. Congregation numbers continue to rise steadily week by week, and it is particularly heartening to see new families who first joined us through Bubble Church now attending the 10am service and becoming part of Junior Church. This is a wonderful development and reflects the welcoming and inclusive nature of our worship.

Our services continue to be shared on social media, helping us reach a wider audience and reminding people that the church is here for them. We are confident that this visibility has played a meaningful role in drawing new members into our congregation.

Maintenance of the church buildings remains an ongoing and important challenge. There is currently a significant amount of electrical work required, and the installation of lighting along the rails leading to the car park will be a great benefit, especially during the darker winter months, improving both safety and accessibility.

Due to the scale and cost of the work ahead, we are hoping to establish a fundraising committee to help support and finance these essential projects. Anyone who has ideas, experience, or would like to be involved is warmly encouraged to contact us—your help would be very much appreciated.

Our church simply could not function without the dedication and generosity of our volunteers, and we wish to express our heartfelt thanks to everyone who gives their time and talents so willingly.

Our sincere thanks go to:

The Finance Team – Claire, Anthony, Jen, and Norman, and to Brian Ewles for faithfully keeping the accounts

Junior Church and Crèche Leaders, who guide our children on their spiritual journey

Sidespeople and Parish Breakfast Team for their hospitality

The Working Party, who maintain the grounds and carry out repairs

The Cleaning Team, whose work is often unseen but always appreciated

Chris Haresnape and the Choir for providing beautiful and uplifting music

Servers who assist in worship

The Flower Group for their magnificent and prayerful displays

Louise in the Office, whose organisation and support keep everything running smoothly

To all of you: thank you. Anyone who would like to join any of these teams is more than welcome—please let us know.

Our grateful thanks go to Fr Ben, Fr Fraser, and Fr Mark for leading our worship week by week with such devotion and care.

Over the past three years, Fr Ben has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to strengthen and enrich the life of our church. While there is still much more to be done, his positivity, availability, and pastoral care have taken us on a spiritual journey in ways we had not previously experienced. A particularly joyful highlight was Easter Sunday, when over 200 people attended the service—a powerful testament to the vitality of our church community. Thank you, Fr Ben. You are a very special priest, and we are deeply grateful for all that you do.

David Cowen & Chris Gravell  
CHURCHWARDENS

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## PCC SECRETARY'S REPORT

### PCC Secretary's Report to 2026 APCM

Since last year's APCM the PCC has met six times – on 11<sup>th</sup> May, 27<sup>th</sup> May, 29<sup>th</sup> July, 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 26<sup>th</sup> November and on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026. Attendance was always very good and everyone contributes well.

The Standing Committee also met six times – on 14<sup>th</sup> May, 9<sup>th</sup> July, 27<sup>th</sup> August, 6<sup>th</sup> November, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2026 and 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026.

The main agenda items at the PCC meetings, as well as the normal report from the Treasurers, the Church School Report, the Deanery Synod Report, Youth Work Report, Churches Together Report, Buildings and Fabric Report Eco Group and Pastoral and Safeguarding Report, have included:

- Safeguarding and achieving ever-increasing requirements.
- Bubble church.
- “St Bart’s” Parent and Toddlers Group
- Rationalising/Consolidation of Church funds.
- Improvements to church path lighting.
- Church repairs and maintenance.
- Re-letting of the Curate’s House.
- Use of Church Hall.
- St Bart’s Parish Share offer for 2026.
- Closer links with St Mary Magdalene’s, Longbenton.
- St Bart’s Eco Policy.
- Best use of the basement.
- Giving and use of the Parish Giving Scheme.
- The remaining requirements of the 2024 Quinquennial Inspection
- Offer of “Prayers of Love and Faith” to same sex couples.

- Priorities for the use of legacy and other gift donations.
- Fees for occasional services, e.g. Renewal of Wedding Vows

As you'll see from the list above, there has been a lot to discuss – we have a busy and, thankfully. Growing church. The PCC owes a huge debt of gratitude to Fr Ben, Fr Fraser, Fr Mark, Louise and Chris and Dave our Wardens, and Claire and Anthony our meticulous Treasurers for their tireless work in keeping “the show on the road” – they do a marvellous job.

Colin Thomson  
HON. PCC SECRETARY

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## FABRIC REPORT

We have a small team of people who help to ensure the fabric of the church is kept in good order.

Some preliminary work was done to the lighting in the church, which has led to a plan for wider lighting of the outside of the church, the path from the car-park, and inside the church itself.

A new cooker was installed in the Hall kitchen, which required significant electrical and gas work.

New locks were fitted in the Basement to ease access from the Church Hall and also to ensure a safe way out of the bottom door.

Gutters were cleaned.

Steps to the crypt were cleaned and painted with slip-resistant paint, and will have the edges painted in contrasting paint when the weather is drier.

Routine works undertaken at 5 Balroy Court.

This all comes at a cost so a special thanks to Claire and Anthony the treasurers for managing the finances so well. They always help us to keep the buildings in good condition. There is still outstanding maintenance work which is ongoing.

Also thanks to the small team of people who help to keep the church grounds in good order.

David Cowen & Chris Gravel  
CHURCHWARDENS

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## SAFEGUARDING REPORT

Safeguarding Committee meets every other month or as required, to maintain St Bartholomew's as a safe place for all those who attend the church and use its facilities.

### Key Achievements and Activity in 2025/6

- 100% compliance on the Diocesan Safeguarding Dashboard.
- Notice board and safeguarding information regularly updated.
- All relevant polices approved by PCC.
- All relevant DBS checks completed.
- Safeguarding discussed at every PCC meeting.
- All training completed.

### Key plans for 2026/7

With last year saw the completion of all the required training and the dashboard completed, this year we hope to review and where necessary update our polices, risk assessments and job descriptions. In addition, after the data breach with our DBS checking service, we have moved to a new supplier. Registration is now complete and the first DBSs are being processed.

### Other comments.

After the mammoth task of completing the Safeguarding training last year I would like to thank everyone involved for completing their courses on time, please note that we'll all have to do it again in 2028!

Sally Robertson

PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER

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## DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

In March we met at St Mary Magdalene's Longbenton and much of the meeting was taken up by planning for the Deanery Mission Week. Deanery Development invited us to come and see St. Michael's and the Lighthouse Project which should be completed by the end of May. The Mission Priest advert closed in that week. The focus of the role will be on Discipling and Young People. The position is for 5 years.

In May we met at Walker Parish Church and Phil Medley welcomed Revd. Ric Waite. the Director of Mission and Ministry, who spoke about New Worshipping Communities and Assistant Lay Ministry. He reflected on the Recruitment Process, which involves People, Money and Time. We are invited to reflect on the ways in which God is with us in our places where we rejoice and cry. Are we over-

worked? His Jesuit Colleagues likened a grave to something we were going to do but failed in the attempt. Each Parish was invited to speak about something new. Fr th Ben spoke about Bubble Church. We formed groups of 3 or 4 to and talked about events that have influenced our growth or decline. We must recognise what we have and achieve new things by trying them.

Important Dates: were the Deanery Mission week, which began with the Ascension Day Service at St. Francis. The Mission Week continued on Thursday 29th May until Sunday 8th June with each Parish doing various tasks. The Deanery Challenge on 31st May was to walk, run, cycle or use transport devising the best route from Christ Church to St. Bartholomew's and having our Pilgrim Cards stamped at each place.

On July 17th we met at our Church and welcomed Bishop Helen-Ann who led Opening Prayers. There was positive feedback from the Deanery Mission Week. One person from each Church was asked to be prepared to give an update for a maximum of 5 minutes about joys and challenges, for example; finance, building and out-reach to a particular age group. I have a copy of my Notes. This was followed by Reflections from Bishop Helen Ann. There was an update about St. Anthony's which needs extensive repairs.

On July 20th a Confirmation Service was held at St. Bartholomew's which included candidates from other churches. and on July 22nd the Rev'd Benjamin Jarvis was appointed as Priest in Charge of St. Mary Magdalene, Longbenton, initially for 5 years. After provision for Any Other Business the meeting closed with Night Prayer.

The November Synod was cancelled because there was a Deanery Development meeting on the 15th at St. Aidan's in Morpeth. We still need a Deanery Finance Officer.

The next Synod was in January 2026 at St. Oswald's Walkergate and after a Reflection about Parish Share during 2025, Archdeacon Rachel and Revd. Ric Waite spoke about the next stage of Deanery Development in the Year of Seeking. Questions and Answers followed about "How our Churches help us to 'Be'. This includes Strategically organising our buildings so they are more welcoming. Peter Dodds asked about the Lighthouse Project. The Church is now open and the Youth Project has resulted in young people telling their parents about it. Fr Ben and Fr Mark spoke about St. Mary Magdalene and the groups which have begun to meet. Ric Waite commented that our Deanery Challenge was a good example of Newcastle East journeying together, doing something together and learning more about each other's Parishes. We thanked Phil Medley for his Ministry in our Deanery. His last service was on the 25th of January before he moved to a new Parish in Bradford.

The new round of Deanery Planning which was launched in November focussed on 3 areas: New Worshipping Communities; Buildings for Mission; Growing closer to God.

Jennifer Brown & Jen Shields

DEANERY SYNOD REPRESENTATIVES

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## TREASURERS' REPORT

During 2025 there was a combined increase of £2,813 in planned giving and cash collections at services.

We were grateful to receive a legacy of £5,000 during the year from the estate of Avis Hodgson.

The overall increase in total incoming resources compared to 2024 was £2,170.

We are grateful to all those to give regularly to support the work and running of our church. We continue to promote the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) as a convenient and efficient method of giving. This works by setting up a direct debit from your bank account which is then passed on directly to St Bart's. If you are a taxpayer you can opt to gift aid your donation, we then receive an additional 25p for every £1 donated at no extra cost to you. PGS eases the administration for the church and benefits our cashflow as we receive the gift aid claim throughout the year as compared to the gift aid on other donations which is made annually. Please do consider signing up to this scheme if you currently do not give in this way.

Church running and activities expenses increased by £4,044 compared to 2024.

We continue to source the energy supply for the church through the Church of England Energy Basket, the benefit of this is accessing reduced rates through collective purchasing power. The energy contracts also source 100% renewable electricity and green gas for churches.

Church maintenance costs in 2025 increased by £1,129. In addition to the regular annual maintenance costs, such as fire and security alarm maintenance, £4,829 has been spent on necessary electrical works on the lighting in church, £1,651 on gas/electrical installation work in the kitchen. There was also painting work completed in the church at a cost of £1,480, work funded from the Church Building Fund. Equipment purchased, £1,349 for the new oven in the kitchen.

In 2025 we made a total parish share payment to the Diocese of £49,410, as agreed by the PCC in the planned budget. This compares to £45,750 in 2024. In October 2025 the PCC approved a three year budget plan and it was agreed that our 2026 parish share payment pledge will be £54,351, which is an increase of 10% compared to 2025.

Net incoming resources for the year to 31 December 2025 was £9,223, compared to £12,372 in 2024. Total cash reserves at that date were £57,639, of which £16,854 are held in restricted funds.

We would like to thank everyone who has supported us in our role as Treasurers. Everything to do with the financial affairs of the church is a team effort. We would like to thank all those who play

their part in the financial affairs of the church, particularly to Norman and Jen Shields for the counting and banking of donations and to Brian Ewles for administration of the Gift Aid records and gift aid claim. We would also like to thank Fr Ben, our Church Wardens Chris and David, Colin Thomson and also Louise in the office for their assistance in allowing us to carry out the Treasurer role. Finally, thanks to Naomi and Andy Lowe who have undertaken the role of Independent Examiner of the Church accounts.

Anthony and Claire Francis  
HON. TREASURERS

ACCOUNTS ISSUED SEPARATELY.

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## ELECTORAL ROLL

Number stands at 149.

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## BAPTISM REPORT

Fr Ben has introduced “Exploring Baptism” a baptism meeting for families who would like their children baptised. This is proving to be a success.

During the last year we have had 29 children and 7 adults. This has included two fathers who were baptised at the same time as their daughters as well as a mother and her son. Which made those services special for the families concerned.

Fr Ben will continue welcoming families who wish to be baptised and to continue their faith by joining our church family.

Anyone who knows family or friends who would like to be baptised please contact the church office.

Chris Gravell  
Baptism Coordinator

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## CHURCH GROUPS & ACTIVITY REPORTS

### **Friday Working Party**

Members

Graham Garnham, John Miller, Yasser Fleifel, Nigel Barlow – bees

Objectives/Role in the life of St Bart’s

To keep the Garden of Remembrance neat and tidy, including care of the rose beds and grass cutting; and any other tasks needed in the immediate environs of the church and hall, as needed or requested.

Care of three bee hives, and producing honey for sale for church funds.

Key activity/achievements in 2025/26

Generally we have been able to keep the Garden and environs clean and tidy, and the grass cut. But we could do much more with more members!

Production of a reasonable amount of honey for sale in 2025.

Plans for 2026/27

Continue as before – but see other comment below, especially regarding the bees.

## Other Comments

### Concerns:

- Irregular items placed in the Garden, including plastic flowers and other non-approved objects in memoriam, including ashes scattered on the ground.
- Problems with the tractor – the cutter is now broken and needs to be mended – the tractor may be nearing the end of its useful life.
- Bee colonies in two hives died over winter, and the other hive is very much depleted – reasons not known. A new colony cost about £300 about 2-3 years ago. Is this the end of bee keeping at Barts?
- There is a considerable accumulation of tree cuttings, twigs, small branches etc., and complete dereliction of the leaf bins – in need of clearance and reconstruction.

Completed by Graham with John

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## Eco Group

### Members

Fr Benjamin Jarvis, Sally Robertson, Anne Garnham, Catherine Lyons, Fiona Gray, Sheena Hanes

### Objectives/Role in the life of St Bart's

To meet on a quarterly basis to monitor, review and update the Church's Eco Policy.

To update the Eco Church survey to capture any changes made.

To raise our Eco Church score by making improvements where practicable and affordable.

To encourage wise and responsible use of resources and care for the Church buildings and grounds.

To share good practice with the congregation and wider community.

### Key activity/achievements in 2025/26

Two successful recycling events -

Small electricals, batteries and light bulbs recycled locally.

Stamps sent to Parkinsons UK to raise funds for research projects.

Medicine foils delivered to Superdrug Pharmacy to be recycled into playground and hospital equipment etc.

Printer cartridges raised £57.65 for the work of Transform Trade.

Achievement of Fairtrade Place of Worship Status in September 2025.

Two new members joined the group.

Resolution of the issue of non-collection of Church waste bins.

### Plans for 2026/27

To meet on a quarterly basis.

Meetings to be focused, and agreed actions to be monitored and updated.

To purchase and install bird boxes in the Church grounds.

To continue to match our activity against the Eco Church Survey and make improvements to our practice where possible.

To consider and improve the temporary storage of items collected by the congregation e.g. People's Kitchen donations.

To hold more 'events'.

Other Comments

Thank you to everyone who engaged with our recycling events and a huge thank you to those who contributed to the purchase of bird boxes.

Completed by Sheena Hanes

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## **St. Bartholomew's Junior Church**

Members

Children aged 5-14. Leaders: Clare Mears, Julia Whitfield, Linda Barnfather, Louise Barnfather, Clair O'Regan, Helen Ewles, David Ewles, Chris Thomson.

Objectives/Role in the life of St Bart's

1. Running alongside the 10am Sunday Eucharist, to mirror this in a child friendly and understandable manner. This involves talk and reflection on the gospel, games, crafts, puzzles, plays and song.
2. To educate the children on God's word, the wider Church community, and their role in it.

Key activity/achievements in 2025/26

Numbers attending continue to grow. In the last year, a doubling of leaders has enabled split into younger and older age groups. This means teaching and activities can be more targeted and helps to increase individual participation.

There have been successful craft days and a junior church outing to consolidate learning and fellowship.

Alongside their Christmas service, the children have also been able to participate in a separate Easter service including a depiction of the Passion of Christ.

Plans for 2026/27

Continue to promote attendance including older siblings in families attending bubble church. Continue to encourage the older children to take an active role in teaching and supporting the younger participants.

Other Comments

It has been very positive that the children are getting more involved in the full life of the church- for example those being confirmed.

Completed by Clare Mears

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### **Park View music group**

Usual meeting dates and times

Third Monday of the month at 10.30am

Membership (if applicable)

Helen Whitfield, Jennifer Brown, Sheila Everard, Trish Clark, Shenna Hanes, Sally Robertson.

Group Objectives or Role of the group in the life of St Bart's

To share Christian fellowship and praise God through music with the residents of Park View Care Home. There are a number of past members of our congregation resident at Park View but the meeting is open to all those who wish to attend.

Key Achievements and Activity in 2025/6

The number of residents attending our monthly meeting continues to vary depending on time of year and staffing levels. However, those that do attend enjoy the music and company. Father Mark came to our February meeting, and I attended his Evergreens service. We wanted to see what the other group was doing, if we could pick up any tips or ideas. As a result, I have decided to try and teach the residents some of the newer hymns. The first attempt being quite successful.

Key plans for 2026/7

To continue our monthly meeting and maintain / grow our numbers and repertoire.

Other comments.

Thanks to the team for turning out each month and to the residents for their hospitality. We may not be the sweetest singers you'll hear but as I remind everyone from time to time, it is the act of worship that is important to God.

Completed by Sally Robertson

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## **Craft Club**

### Members

Members of the congregation

### Objectives/Role in the life of St Bart's

To share a creative space doing various crafts and fellowship.

### Key activity/achievements in 2025/26

Held a craft stall at the Christmas fair to raise funds for Church, We gained a new permanent member from the congregation and enjoyed an afternoon out for Christmas.

### Plans for 2026/27

To continue sharing craft ideas and teaching each other about the hobbies we love.

Completed by Ann Luckley

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## **Choir and Music**

### Members

Jennifer, Jennie, Jen, Pat, Anne, Frances, Colin, Arthur, Chris (H)

### Objectives/Role in the life of St Bart's

Lead and support music in worship through the singing of hymns, settings for the eucharist, antiphonal items for cantor/choir and congregation, such as psalms and responses, and solo choral and instrumental works appropriate to the liturgy. Providing music and talks for non-liturgical gatherings including Christmas Fair, Monday Club Talks, music theory and instrumental tuition.

### Key activity/achievements in 2025/26

William Mathias' Communion Service was introduced this Lent and is settling in well.

It can be difficult for the organist to see all of the Nave in services because of the layout of the building and the position of the organ console. A monitor has been provided and connected to a pre-existing CCTV, allowing the organist a clear view of The Font, Nave, Main Doors and so on. This is especially useful at funerals, baptisms, weddings and large processions such as Palm Sunday, especially if choir members are elsewhere and unable to assist.

Everyone loves the new grand piano. It gets used to accompany the choir and/or congregations and can be well suited to certain styles of music or smaller settings.

The organ is seeing regular use with organ students also.

Fr. Ben has made a considerable contribution to the liturgical and musical life of this church. It is much more varied and enriched now.

The choir is indebted to Jen too for her help in organising all of the music when it is getting filed away.

Plans for 2026/27

Keep going and get stronger. The choir has a large repertoire and things can get very busy at certain times of year. It is important that each member is as organised as possible in terms of music and service sheets so that the most can be made of our time practising together. This inevitably requires that we all turn up in plenty of time before rehearsals and services to 'get our ducks in a line' so that everything can run smoothly.

Completed by Chris Haresnape

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## **Altar Servers**

Members

Phil Emmerson, Louise Barnfather, Chris Thomson, Ewan Whitfield, Aidan Whitfield, Lorraine Cuthbertson, Julie Copeland, Martha Nabasirye, Graham Garnham, John Miller, Colin Thomson, Emily Jane Knight, Jackie Cowen

Objectives/Role in the life of St Bart's

The Servers are lay ministers who assist the ministers in the service of the Lord at the altar for the Eucharist and at other services. Especially: Sunday 10am, Sunday 8am and Wednesday 10am.

Key activity/achievements in 2025/26

This past year has been very successful for serving. We have recruited some fantastic new members and have taken the opportunity to develop our knowledge and skills through some in church training and we have now established a rota for our servers.

We introduced using senior servers as 'sub-deacons' for the most solemn liturgies in Holy Week.

Plans for 2026/27

Looking forward we would like to maintain the high standards of serving shown this past year and we are still keen to recruit some more servers; it does not matter what age or skill level and get all servers trained on every aspect of serving.

The cross, two candles, and a spare (or incense) every Sunday would be ideal.

Completed by Phil Emmerson

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## **St Bartholomew's Mothers' Union**

Usual meeting dates and times – 3rd Tuesdays every month at 1.30pm in Church Hall – all welcome

### Membership (if applicable)

- Committee – Alyson Thomson, Sheena Haynes, Sally Robertson, Ailsa Scott and Jennie Tapster.
- Other members – Frances Atkinson, Pat Black, Jennifer Brown, Maureen Carrick, Anna-Lisa Gardiner, Rosamund Glenn, Fiona Gray, Barbara Hall, Mary Kay, Carol Kerr, Mollie Phillips, Joan Wilson and Joan Weldon.
- Indoor Member – Margaret Armstrong.

### Group Objectives or Role of the group in the life of St Bart's

- Worldwide: To maintain a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer, worship and service. To promote conditions in society favourable to stable family life and the protection of children. To help those whose family life has met with adversity and to promote and support married life.
- In our Branch: To promote fellowship for our members and the church congregation. To raise funds for charities and good causes in this country and around the world and to stand up against injustice.

### Key Achievements and Activity in 2025-26

- Three members took part in the World Day of Prayer Service at St Mary Magdalene.
- Our fundraising events this year were: March – Soup & Sandwich lunch and in July – Afternoon Tea in the church hall.
- We supported the following projects world wide – Literacy Projects in the third world, Action against Gender Violence, Leadership training and Parenting and Family life Projects
- Locally:
- We continue to provide “Comfort Bags” to all parents of new starters at the Church School.
- “NO MORE 1 in 3” Walk of Witness from church to Forest Hall Shops in support of Action Against Gender Abuse. Thank you to members of the congregation who walked with us.
- Social events included Christmas Lunch at Amici's and lunch at Twin Farms Restaurant with member of other local branches in support of women's refuges – lovely to have some husbands attend
- At Christmas, with other branches, we supported the Peoples Kitchen in Newcastle with money and gifts.

- Thanks to the congregation for all their support and generous donations when we make requests for money which enables us to support homeless people at Christmas time and a women's refuge locally by providing 15 winter coats for the children currently living at the refuge.

#### Key plans for 2026

- Continue with our fundraising activities as in previous years and respond to new requests for help as they arise (if we can).
- Increase our membership – we are a very friendly bunch and you would be very welcome.
- Continue to share our fellowship with our members and the congregation and to have fun!

Completed by Alyson Thomson

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*Other reports may be given in person.*