

**St Nicholas Church**  
**Ministry Reports October 2020**



The church's vision has expanded so much in the last couple of years and we are very excited to see the Lord's plans beginning to come to fruition and look forward with expectancy to the future and all that is to come.

**Property Report**

**Alan Smith**

1. My thanks are due to Chris Jelley for the work he did during his time as Warden.
2. I am also thankful for the work of Chris Robinson in carrying out the day to day maintenance of the Church buildings and the Youth Centre. Due to very understandable personal reasons, Chris has resigned from the position of Church Handyman. We are currently advertising the post in the Notice Sheet. If you know anyone who might be interested, please let me know.
3. John White of Padgett White has been appointed our new Church Architect, taking over from Dennis Jones, who retired.
4. Our new Architect carried out further investigations into the insulation of the Upper Hall and concluded that this was not a viable option, because it would cause a significant risk of condensation in the roof structure, leading to future problems.
5. The Upper Hall has been recarpeted.
6. The Eco Group has recommended that the lights in the sanctuary be replaced by LED lighting, which will be more efficient and will ultimately be self-financing. The Group is in the process of obtaining a further quote for this work, which will then enable further consideration to be given to this proposal.
7. A draft Pastoral Scheme has been made by the Church Commissioners in respect of the Providence Row Chapel, the last date for objections to which is 22 November. Briefly, the effect of the Scheme, when made, will be to transfer the freehold ownership of the Chapel and an area of land approximately two metres in width around it to the Durham Diocesan Board of Finance, which will then transfer the freehold to the Orthodox Church of St. Cuthbert and St. Bede, Durham, to enable the Chapel to be used by it as a place of worship. The work to the Chapel by the Orthodox Church is ongoing. If the work is not completed, or if the building is no longer used as a place of worship, then the ownership of the land will revert. So far there has been a considerable amount of work in managing the use of the land by the Orthodox Church, which will no doubt continue. We are awaiting further plans for the next phase of the work which have to be approved by the PCC first and also require a Faculty. Hopefully, these plans will be submitted to the November PCC.
8. The PCC has resolved to apply to the Ministry of Justice for an Order declaring the Churchyard a closed one, but this procedure will not be commenced until the Pastoral Scheme referred to above has been made and come into effect.
9. In late summer, the PCC put in a bid to the Kier Community Initiative Project for funding to make the graveyard into an open green space which can be used by the people of

**Warden's Report**

**Alan Smith/Mary Anne Freer**

It is with very thankful hearts that we present this report. God has been so generous in his goodness, his provision and his guidance to us all. We are thankful to all those at St Nics, both volunteers and staff who have stepped up and thought creatively and strategically as we have faced together the challenges and new opportunities that these "unprecedented times" have brought.

Since the last APCM, as with our lives, so our church has seen many changes. Over the last eighteen months, we have worshipped together in our building, with congregations at all services increasing in numbers, especially at the 6.30 service, which now runs throughout the year without taking a break over the summer. Since mid-March our church services and some activities have moved online. We are so thankful to Arun who's strong vision and can do attitude inspired a very talented team to make this happen. Zoom has made it possible for us to stay connected as a church and the traditional phone call has also played a big part at an individual level. We are so thankful and encouraged by all those small group leaders and church members who have faithfully looked after others, who have needed help. Although it has taken a great team, risk assessments and rigorous planning, we are excited to see some limited re-opening of our building for private prayer and some services.

We are delighted that over this last year and a half with the help of the resource church funding, we have been able to expand and develop our staff team. They have been amazing and very flexible especially during the lockdown period, just pitching in and using all that they are in serving the Lord at St Nic's.

Finding space for our expanded team to work effectively was a real challenge and we are very grateful to Chris Jelley who led the way, overseeing the redesign and fitting out of our office space, providing the room for the staff to work effectively both in teams and as individuals.

The coronavirus restrictions have brought with them some challenges to the church finances. With additional expenses required both to keep the church clean, the staff and each one of us safe, and to deliver our digital footprint, reaching a much wider audience for the first time. At the same time our income from church attendance has of course fallen. We are very grateful to all those who faithfully give via standing order each month or use the "Donate" button on our website, but there is a shortfall which we keep under review.

Durham and to restore it to its former glory! Sadly, we learned recently that we have not won any funding. There are several, sometimes complex, ongoing issues with the maintenance of the Churchyard, which is now our responsibility and which have already taken a lot of our time and are going to take a lot more work to resolve.

10. Remedial work has been carried out to the chapel ceiling in Church.

11. Before lockdown it was intended to erect scaffolding on the outside of the Church next to Gateway to carry out exploratory work to check the condition of the high up windows (the Clerestory windows). The latest situation is that plaster has fallen from just above one of the recesses into which the small windows in the chapel are set, which might have been caused by water damage. The exploratory work was put on hold because of lockdown, but we are now actively pursuing this with the Church Architect.

I am very thankful to Arun, Mary Anne and Kate, our Operations Manager, for their help and to Neil Duddy for maintaining and testing the fire extinguishers in the Youth Centre and in Church. I am also thankful to Tim Biddlecome for his work in maintaining the Youth Centre grounds.

**MEV Report**

**Claire Elwood**

This has been our second year of running a Ministry Experience Volunteer programme and what an asset to the team and our church Tom, Chloe and Logan have been.

Tom, with a desire to engage with evangelism through prayer, has been a key participant in prayer ministry and has recently developed a Healing on the Streets team. In addition, Tom has enjoyed leading a group in Alpha as well as leading our chapel engagement team for Lumiere. Playing a full part in services through leading, preaching and playing the violin, the church, and especially the 6.30pm service has benefitted enormously from Tom's prayerful dedication and excellence in all he has done. As a Spiritual Support Group leader, Tom has enabled the start of our Cuthbert Community.

Chloe has flourished this year in finding her calling in a variety of roles that have given her the satisfaction of seeing a job well done. Her gift of hospitality and love for people has meant Chloe has brought some welcome changes to Coffee Lounge, with more to come. Lumiere benefitted hugely from her organisational skill and hospitality also. Developing evident leadership skills is a key part of the MEV year and like Tom, Chloe has had opportunity to lead an Alpha group, a Spiritual Support Group and help considerably with Student Night. She has risen to the challenge of each with enthusiasm, dedication and excellence. Her contributions to services and children's activities have blessed us enormously.

Logan, as our house-for-duty MEV has explored the role of service within the Christian community by acting as verger for us. Having him available for much chair moving and church locking has been an asset indeed. Alongside this very practical role, Logan has applied his musical gifts both in contributing to our Sunday worship through prayer and in beginning our St. Nics Community Choir. Currently the choir enhances our worship at the 11am service and is exploring ways to develop a more missional aspect to community choir singing in the future so that we can build bridges and bless our city.

We have recently welcomed our new MEVs for 2020/21: David Lewis, Catriona Inglis and Diego as our house-for-duty MEV.

Catriona is helping Zoe with students as well as covering our youth ministry alongside James Cochran. I am sure we will see her popping up on-line also as the days go by.

David is hoping to get stuck in to HOTS alongside Tom and the rest of the team as well as enabling the key work of the eco group. He too you will see frequently leading our daily prayers.

Diego will be assisting Kate and Mary Anne with some of the more practical aspects of church.

Do pray for them as they help us work out what ministry in ongoing covid times looks like.

## Student Report

Zoe Mathias

This term our student ministry has develop from the growth we saw in the first term. One of the joys has been the increased numbers of freshers that we have been seeing on a Sunday and throughout the week. On an average Sunday we have 15 first year students attending our 11 and 6:30 service.

Alongside Andrew Poxon and Vicky Penn, I am working to establish a regular monthly meeting of the postgraduate students in our church. We hope that the meetings will range from discipleship focused, speaker focused and social focused. This term we ran a trip to the Station House pub, and invited Walter Moberly to come and speak to us.

Our Student Night is developing well, and proving to be a helpful place to develop leaders. It provides a safe place for someone to try leading a group discussion, giving a talk or leading worship. We were able to make space for students who have never lead on a Sunday to have their first go at leading worship. (Luckily student also enjoy student night as a chance to improve their tech skills too...) Student Night last term was a joy to run, as the rotas were easy to fill and people came wanting to be challenged.

Our Spiritual support groups developed well last term, and I was able to create some new groups. As of now we have 9 Cuthbert groups with 41 students represented in them. I am enthusiastic about developing the Cuthbert group model.

We ran our first trip this term as a walk to Finchale priory, this was a wonderful time with 15 people attending. Before COVID19 distancing measures, I had hoped to run a walk once a month. There is closed group facebook page for members of amigos, and I hope to run some digital catch up in the coming weeks.

### Update

We found maintaining Amigos digitally was hard, so much of amigo is linked with the physical being present and together with other. I am enthusiastic about the opportunities for a mixed-economy amigo as the start of this new academic year.

## Youth Report

Joe Cottrell

### 1. Pattern During Lockdown

During lockdown we ran the following sessions each week via zoom

#### 1.1 Sessions:

##### Pastoral

Sundays Drop-in for 16+ 7:30-8:30- They joined us after our 6:30 Livestream to check in, catch up and reflect.

Wednesday Pastoral/Prayer Groups – 3 Young people in a group – encourage the YP to do life together and pray for each other. The smaller groups is an opportunity to do some prayer and pastoral care with our young people, a chance for them to share how life is going and pray for each other. Alternated between prayer and a bible study.

##### Discipleship and Teaching

Youth Discipleship 5.20 – 6.20 Sunday: Finishing just in time to catch our livestream, we ran a weekly discipleship session. For the first 9 weeks we used the great material provided by Youth Alpha. A great opportunity to get back to basics with who Jesus is and why we called to follow him. From that we moved to look at a series on Justice responding in particular to the black lives matter and environmental justice issues then a series on the rhythms of Grace

60 second sermons for our young people on Instagram. Twice a week we shared a 60 sec sermon by someone on our Youth team or a young person themselves. These have proved very popular with our young people.

Sunday Morning 10 am service planning – We provided a written study for the 11am lectionary reading.

##### Socials

We had 32 people signed up to attend our weekend away, however sadly COVID-19 meant that we had to delay this trip until 2021.

Looking forward, it seems increasingly unlikely that our students will return to Durham this academic year. And this has meant a quick turn around to developing our plans digitally. We are continuing to do Student Night and the post 6:30 pub trip on Zoom, and it is my hope to continue to do these in the coming weeks. This week we have our first digital student night and pub trip. Both these saw 20 people attending. It is my hope that we can see more people attending in the coming weeks. Among some of the younger students there is some trepidation about joining a zoom call at the moment.

The majority of our spiritual support groups are committed it continue to meet, and I am hoping to form two new ones digitally.

We will be sharing content daily on our Facebook page.

### Update

It was a funny last term doing everything online, but I think it was a helpful learning time for us. We continued as usual with post church pub trips on zoom, and student night. These were well attended and then numbers began to fall as 'zoom fatigue' began to kick in. Our Cuthbert groups were our strength during lock down – their success (similar to physical Cuthbert groups) was linked the discipline of the leader trying to stick to a weekly rhythm of meeting, in large once this structure was in place they worked well.

We ran a student alpha course which was attended by 7 people one of whom then started attending student night and joined a spiritual support group. Phoebe Turner joined us digitally from her year abroad and felt a warm welcome digitally from us.

## Amigos Report

Zoe Mathias

This term we were able to celebrate 25 years of Amigos. The celebration, happening at all three services, was a success. It was helpful to honour those who had sustained Amigos faithfully for so many years and raise the profile of the ministry.

This term we changed the meeting time of Amigos to 8pm to allow members of Amigos to attend our 6pm Alpha course beforehand. A number did, one particularly enjoyed the experience and began to attend church.

Amigos has begun to develop a friendly invitational culture we have a range of people from different countries and ages who have commented warmly about the welcome they received.

**7pm Thursday night social hangout (11 – 15's)** Thursdays we hosted a Zoom webchat. A social time to check with each other, see how we're all doing. A fun time play some games (including fan favourite online mafia) and keeping our spirits up during this time.

**Weekly challenge** During the full lockdown we ran a series of weekly challenges for the young people to compete in.

### 1.2 Social Media

We expanded our social media. On Instagram and Facebook we put out resources and links as well as our own content. This ranged from mental health, discipleship to prayer and films. See <https://www.instagram.com/stnicsyouth/> and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/654771288667960/>, we also have a youth page and youth resources page on our website.

### 1.3 Weekly Timetable

#### Monday

Prayer – On our Social Media

What's happening this week – Email and Social Media

Year 5/6 Social - 6:30pm Zoom

#### Tuesday

Mental Health Resource – Social Media

60 sec Sermon - Social Media

#### Wednesday

Discipleship Resources - Social Media

Pastoral Groups - Zoom

#### Thursday

60 sec Sermon - Social Media

Youth social hangout - Zoom

#### Friday

Sunday Study Resource – Website

#### Sunday

Youth Discipleship – 5:20-6:20 (11-15) Zoom

Youth Drop In – 7:30 (16+) Zoom

### 2. Outreach

#### 2.1 Mission Week

During lockdown we ran a mission week.

**Background**

Back in February thanks to Kate Swann, we started to have conversations with Sola Ayodeji who is the Academy Course Leader for The Message Trust about hosting a mission week. Students join the Academy to spend a year deepening their relationship with God, being challenged, and gaining new experiences and to grow a heart of an Evangelist.

**Outline of Week**

The Fearless Mission Week was a joint project by the youth and family's teams of St Nics and The Message Trust. The week was an online mission and discipleship week due to the lockdown restrictions caused by the coronavirus epidemic. Having previously been planned as a physical mission week with the team from the message coming up to Durham. The move to online provided difficulties as well as opportunities. Our ability to directly reach out to those outside of our church circles was greatly reduced but our ability to connect with people outside our local area was much increased. The week was put together in just over two weeks due to the change of circumstances. The message team themselves only had a week before it started to prepare. Our primary aim of the week had been towards missional outreach but shifted to include a strong focus on discipleship as well. This reflected the fact that we had much more contact online with young people already associated with our church and that in terms of advertising it out our main avenues were through existing church and youth networks and organisations. However, we still wanted to keep a missional aspect for the week, so we came up with the following plan.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	10:11AM YEAR 5-6 SESSION ZOOM	10:11AM YEAR 5-6 SESSION ZOOM	10:11AM YEAR 5-6 SESSION ZOOM	10:11AM YEAR 5-6 SESSION ZOOM
	11AM YEAR 7-10 SESSIONS RELEASED YOUTUBE FOLLOWED BY ZOOM			
1PM TESTIMONY AND INTRO VIDS	1PM 60 SEC SERMON AND BIG QUESTIONS INSTAGRAM	1PM TESTIMONY AND BIG QUESTIONS INSTAGRAM	1PM 60 SEC SERMON AND BIG QUESTIONS INSTAGRAM	1PM TESTIMONY AND BIG QUESTIONS INSTAGRAM
	3:15 YEAR 11-13 SESSION RELEASED YOUTUBE			
	6:45-8:00PM YOUTH HANG OUT YEARS 7-10 ZOOM	6:45-8:00PM YOUTH HANG OUT YEARS 7-10 ZOOM	6:45-8:00PM YOUTH HANG OUT YEARS 7-10 ZOOM	6:45-8:00PM YOUTH WORSHIP EVENING ALL AGE FACEBOOK LIVE
	8:15-9:00PM YOUTH CHECK IN YEARS 11-13 ZOOM	8:15-9:00PM YOUTH CHECK IN YEARS 11-13 ZOOM	8:15-9:00PM YOUTH CHECK IN YEARS 11-13 ZOOM	

We split the week into three age streams years 5-6, years 7-10 and years 11-13 this meant we could target the material and socials to better cater for the different needs and desires of these age groups. Our Youtube and morning Zoom sessions were the discipleship offerings for the week. Our missional elements were the 60 sec sermons and testimonies

network) he said he did not know anyone who was attempting an online mission week with most churches cancelling or postponing there's. The Message team had similar stories saying most teams had been cancelled. We knew we had limited time but felt it important to start to work out how mission might work in a more virtual setting as, it seems likely, this will be our setting for some time. Our internal youth work had successfully transitioned to online, so this seemed the next step. Our outcomes were to explore fearless identity with our young people, both in terms of their own discipleship and mission. To connect with young people outside our church, both those in other churches and those who are not a part of a church. And to raise our social media platforms to be able to share more of the good news of Jesus Christ.

The week did manage to achieve something in all three areas. We had solid engagement from our own young people in our zoom sessions. The Message did a good job teaching and communicating what identity in God looks like and the missional aspects of this. One highlight of the week was the fact that 3 students who we had previously only had contact via the climate strike came to our escape room evening. They had a good time and asked if they could join us for other sessions in the future. Online we had good views on our Instagram video posts, although not great engagement with the big questions. It was good to launch a YouTube channel and this platform is an area to grow as it is one of the most used for young people.

**Review Points**

We reviewed the week with the message trust. The message team was very thankful for us providing the opportunity to explore what mission looked like online as most projects had been cancelled. They felt like they could have done with more time to prepare as they only found out a week and a half before starting. Indeed, we only met the whole team the Sunday before the week. We knew coming into this week that if we were planning a future project, we would have a longer run in. However, they enjoyed the week and felt it worked. They reflected that sometimes it is easier to join an online group, less out of comfort zoom if still at home. They also liked how we could bring in people from all over the country and that this could be increased worldwide in the future. It was felt that the three age groups were a good split. The team felt the 60 second sermons and testimonies were a great part of it and allowed a more missional platform. We had already been doing 60 sec sermons but adding in 60 sec testimonies would be a great addition. There were two difficulties in using zoom first if the young person does not know anyone else, they are nervous about joining and we found some young people who had signed up did not attend because of this. Second, this is all very new, and parents are still nervous about signing up for online activities, so offering both zoom and YouTube allowed them to join for some of the week. This was reflected in the number we had sign up via our online sign up versus number attended.

We reflected that there would be elements of the online week that could be incorporated into a physical mission week. The social media posts would work and having some pre-week zoom sessions so that young people could meet the team might help give people confidence to invite friends to events.

on Instagram (our biggest social media platform) and the Big Questions on there. The socials in the evening were also missional as we were encouraging youth to invite friends and the last missional element was the Friday evening worship service.

The theme of the week was identity with us concentrating on the idea of fearless identity. This topic was suggested by the message trust as it was the topic they had been working on all year. The team from the message trust provided all the material for the week recording videos and songs for the YouTube and Instagram posts. They sent this across to us which we then edited and released on our platforms (our new YouTube channel, Instagram, and Facebook). We then put together the Big Question posts from questions posed from our Young People and hosted the zoom sessions. The evenings were a combination of games and activities provided by both ourselves and the message.

**Numbers**

**Sign Ups** – We used the vent function of church suite to do sign ups 38 (not all of our young people signed up via the church suite)

**Zoom**

**School Years 5-6** (18 throughout the week on Zoom)

13 from St Nics, 2 from Penrith, 2 from Preston, 1 from Durham

**School Years 7-10** (10 throughout the week on Zoom)

9 from St Nics, 1 from Durham – no church named

**School years 11-3** (we saw 10 on Zoom throughout the week)

4 from our Sunday evening group, 3 very fringe of St Nics, 3 from Durham Johnston/Climate strike

**YouTube**

**School Years 7-10**

Day 1 Video - 38 views, Day 2 Video - 28 views, Day 3 Video - 26 views, Day 4 Video - 22 views

**School years 11-3**

Day 1 Video - 25 views, Day 2 Video - 14 views, Day 3 Video - 13 views, Day 4 Video - 22 views

**Instagram**

293 views of videos and 26 likes, 16 comments

**Achievements and Outcomes**

When we started this project, we knew we were attempting something new. Indeed, in a conversation with Andy Milnes before the week (coordinator of the missional youth

The topic of identity worked well. The length of the sessions felt about right (30min YouTube 30mins zoom discussion) and having four days felt enough. Even a full 5-day week might have been too much online. The timing of the sessions was mixed, some of our young people in the 7-10 group did not want to do a morning session, this might be something to review in the future. Again, the pre-week work came up that perhaps finding out from young people what they were looking for from the week before had then giving this to the team to help tailor their content would have helped. We had thought of this already but did not have the time for this week, in the future this would be something we would incorporate.

The timing also contributed to some difficulties during the week the videos were often being recorded the night before the day there were due. This led to very late-night submissions and editing apart from a technical difficulty on the first day we managed to get material out online throughout the week, but it was very close-run thing. On the last day this became a major issue with the Friday evening worship service video being submitted to us well after the time it was due to go out, it also was only half completed with many segments with just audio there wasn't the time to edit even for a late release so we had to cancel it. This was disappointing as it would have been a good end to the week. In future we would want all submissions in the week before to give us time to review, edit and upload everything in plenty of time. However, we did know this coming into the week. All in all, with the newness of it all and the time constraint it was a successful week with grew young people in their faith and spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

**2.2 Outreach Sessions**

During lockdown we built on relationships we had developed through work with 16+ young people, mainly through the youth climate strikes and mission week. We held zoom meeting on a Tuesday evening and other times. We ran online escape rooms, youth socials as well as sessions helping them with university applications.

**Children and families report.**

**Kate Swann**

Many exciting moments have happened in the life of the children and families work in our church over the past 12 months and there are have been many blessings to thank God for. We have seen a steady increase in the number of children and families who have decided to make St Nic's their home and although it is not about the numbers, it is encouraging that we have around 45 children below the age of 16 on a Sunday morning. Which is an increase of about 10 a week from last year. To put this into context, the General Synod report dated February 2020 states "According to the single church returns 38% of these churches have no 0-16's and 68% of them have 5 or fewer 0-16's." As a church we are in the top 6.4% of C of E churches who have 25 or more 0-16's each week. (Link to the full report:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/GS%202161%20Children%20and%20Youth%20Ministry%20Full%20with%20Appendix%20-%20Final.pdf>)

## Sunday Services

I continue to plan for the following groups on a Sunday morning. We follow the same Bible passages as the rest of the church and I mostly use Urban Saints material to do this. This year saw a change in names for some of our groups. Each group is now named after lights reflecting the verses in Matthew 5: 14-16. Each week we endeavour to disciple each child and help them to be lights for Jesus during the rest of the week.

### Glo tots – (previously creche 0-3 year olds)

Glo tots are our smallest group and generally have less than 5 babies and toddlers attending each week. They meet in the chapel but have recently relocated to the lower hall whilst the chapel has been out of use! Glo tots leave the service with the rest of the children and come back in at the end. During their session they play with the toys, listen to a story whilst having a drink and biscuit and then sing some songs. I have recently spent a few sessions in Glo tots and over the next 12 months I plan to develop and enhance the way in which this group runs.

### Sparkly Stars – (3-7 Year olds)

Sparkly stars are our biggest group and will often have about 20 children. The children leave for their group after the children's slot in the service and return during the last song or during the peace if it is communion. During a typical sparkly stars session the children will look at books on the spots and then have a drink and biscuit. They will then do an introduction game for the session and then split into 2 groups, a nursery/ reception group (3-5 Yr olds) and a Key stage 1 group (5-7 Yr olds). In these groups they will look at the Bible passage for the day at a level that is appropriate for their age and then do a prayer activity. When both groups have finished they come back together and the children will have the choice of 4 or 5 activities that they can do to consolidate their learning. This may take the form of a game, structured play or a craft. We gather all the children together at the end and pray for them before their parents come and collect them. The children really enjoy being in each other's company and taking part in the activities and often we have very insightful conversations about God and life!

### Illuminate – (previously known as youth church younger 7-11)

This group mostly meet in the lantern room in the town hall. This is a group of 2 halves. There is a large group of 10 year olds and a large group of 7 year olds and only a couple of children outside of this. In total we average around 15 children each Sunday. Their weekly session will typically start with an interactive introduction activity and the all-important drink and biscuit! They will then explore the Bible passage in smaller groups and pray in response to what they have discussed. They will then come back together before heading back to church. Until recently they have also, once a month, joined with the older youth church group to plan for the family service. The illuminate children really enjoyed having the older children to work with and they collaborated well to come up with some creative ideas for the family service. We will continue to ask for the young people's input into the family service but in a different way. I always enjoy my time with this group and it has been lovely

February 2020 saw our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual holiday club. This year our theme was 'On your Marks' looking at Marks gospel using the theme of the Olympics. We converted the church into an Olympic stadium complete with a tunnel, a podium and an Olympic torch. We had over 40 Primary school aged children during the week. There were many highlights from the week - from the fellowship of the children who came, to the amazing team and the enthusiasm of the young leaders. But my personal highlight was the joy of seeing some of the children make a personal commitment of faith.

Thank you to everyone who prayed for us and all of the volunteers who helped to make it a massive success. I especially want to thank for the core team – Phil, Sarah, Chloe, Susan, Abi and Miss Replay herself – Jenny. This really could not happen without the help of these lovely people. We are very, very sad to be saying goodbye to Jenny (AKA Shiner/ Captain Off/Miss Replay) She will be greatly missed and we wish the whole Guilder family well, as they move to Lancaster.

### The 'Raising Faith' Parenting Course.

Last year I ran our very first parenting course called 'Raising faith.' It is a 6 week DVD course produced by Care for the Family. It investigates ways in which we nurture and help to develop the faith of our children at home. We had 4 families represented on the course and it was lovely to share experiences and pray for each other. All of the families who came found it very beneficial and would highly recommend it to others in the future. I plan to run another course very soon. If you would like more information about the course go to: [www.careforthefamily.org.uk/shop/faith-resources/raising-faith-sessions](http://www.careforthefamily.org.uk/shop/faith-resources/raising-faith-sessions)

## Other Highlights

There are a few more highlights from last year. Last spring, it was a privilege and joy to work alongside Jo Logon in preparing 2 of our young people for confirmation. The discussion session were really fun and the service itself was very special. In the autumn we ran our second light party in the Youth Centre. This takes place on October the 31<sup>st</sup> as an alternative to Halloween. We had about 25 Primary school aged children, some of whom came because they had come to last year's holiday club. And last November I spent 3 days with other children's workers from across the country at the New Wine Kids Leaders conference. I found this to be a great time of fellowship, teaching and worship and it was great to talk to others who do my job in churches of similar sizes.

On a personal note, I would like to say thank you for all of your prayers, support and encouraging words. It is a privilege and a joy to serve God, in this way, at this particular time. Please continue to pray for us as a family and for my work over the next 12 months, especially as I begin to look at how, as a church, we can develop multigenerational opportunities.

## Update

### Sunday resources

to see their faith and personalities develop over the past 12 months. As an illuminate team we have worked hard to make these sessions engaging and to provide opportunities for the children to reflect on their own faith and although there are always ways in which we can improve, I feel that we have a good routine and solid foundation to build on.

I think it is highly appropriate to pause at this point and say a massive thank you to all of the people who volunteer in these groups on a Sunday. Each Sunday we require at least 11 volunteers and in total we have over 25 adults who regularly give up their time to serve in this way. They are all fantastic people. The love and the care they provide for the children of our church is exceptional and I am truly grateful for everything they have done and will continue to do. However, we are always have space on our teams for more volunteers!

### The 4pm family service

The 4pm service has continued to be a hit with the children and families within our church community and has gone from strength to strength. The service is a more informal service which takes place on the first Sunday of every month. It involves a mixture of modern worship songs and action songs, interactive prayer activities and Bible stories. Each month the service gives opportunities for young people to get involved and a favourite and regular feature has become 'Big Chair, Little Chair' where a member of the congregation is interviewed by a young person. The young person gets to sit on a big chair and the adult, a little one! Another highlight has been the food after the service. Our fantastic team of cooks made up of Paul and Helen Sewell, Chris Stokes, Chris Everett and Mary Anne have each month cooked lovely hot meals for over 60 people. And when we thought they could not possibly get any better, they then produced an amazing Christmas dinner after our Christingle service and feed over 120 people! - What a team! They, and the secret team of 'cake fairies', the 'washer uppers' and 'put awayers' have done an amazing job every month and we are all truly grateful for their work.

This service took a change of direction at the start of 2020. Myself, the staff and the family service planning team felt that the service had become very successful but it was a shame that it was not really being shared with the wider St Nic's congregation and that maybe, the whole church, multigenerational dimension, was missing from the service. It was also becoming apparent that this service involved a lot of manpower and extra resources which was a big ask for a 4<sup>th</sup> service on a Sunday. So we decided to move it to the 11am slot on the first Sunday of every month, keeping to mostly the same format, including having food afterwards. At the time of writing we have now had 3 family services at 11am and they have been a triumph! The numbers have doubled, the children still enjoy it, and different generations attend and enjoy it too! Which has led to a greater whole church family feel. I have particularly enjoyed watching different people come together over the 'bring and share' meals afterwards. I would like to thank everyone who has helped with the family service over the past 12 months and with this transition. I would especially like to mention Matt Guilder, who as part of his placement with us has worked hard on planning and delivering the family service and has created a format that we can move forward with.

### Holiday club

Each week I produce resources for families to do at home which follow the same Bible passage as the 11am Service. Most of the material I use comes from 'roots on the web' which produce lectionary based resources for all ages. The weekly resources are posted on the children and families website page along with our new monthly Memory verse and photos that the families have sent of their wonderful creations. For more information please visit <https://www.stnics.org.uk/children-families>

### Pyjama church

On a Sunday At 9:15, my laptop comes alive as I meet with some of our families over zoom for pyjama church! This is a time for the families to come together as I led them through this week's resources. We have energetic times of worship, games run by some of our older children, interactive story time, time for reflective prayer and a crafts segment, also produced by one of our Year 6 children. Recently I have also added a weekly challenge based on the theme of the week. The feedback from parents has been very positive and it has also helped new families to settle into our church even through this strange time. I have found this time together a real blessing and I would particularly like to thank Chris Taylor who has done the tech for me each week as well as thanking all of the wonderful faithful families who have supported this over the past few months. I imagine that pyjama church will continue over the coming months until we are in a situation where we can safely bring the children back to a Sunday school setting.

### Year 5 and 6 Zoom

We are very blessed as a church to have a large group of children who are in their final year of primary school. We felt that they need something more than the rest of the children as they transition into being 'youth'! So Myself and the Youth Missioners have met with this group once a week on zoom for faith, fun, fellowship. We have looked at a range of topics from self image through to fear and peace in a time of change. The young people (I get told off for calling them children!) and their parents have greatly appreciated the opportunity to meet this way. We are currently looking into how we can continue this group in person, when it is safe to do so.

### Raising Faith

From June through to July I ran our second Raising faith course. We had 5 families participating through zoom and they all found the course very inspiring and encouraging especially during this strange time. The joy of running the course online was that more parents were able to attend as there was less need for babysitters. It also opened up the possibility of people from other churches joining us. We even had a lovely lady from London join us, who had heard about the course from a friend who had completed it at St Nics last year!

For me, running this course has become even more important during lockdown. Recently the Church of England have released a new initiative called 'Growing faith' Research they have conducted shows that a children's faith is strengthened and developed through strong

links between school, church and home with all 3 of these having an equally important part to play. This course offers so many suggestions on how to grow faith at home and provides an opportunity for parents to meet together and discuss ideas surrounding this.

#### Facebook

The St Nics families facebook page continues to be an informal way I use to keep in contact with our families. Through this page I share new resources with them and they can share resources and offer support to each other.

#### Tiddlywinks

#### Kate Swann

Tiddlywinks is our Baby and Toddler group which meets at 9:30am on a Wednesday in the Youth Centre. We have a strong core of regular mums, nannies and grandparents who attend with their adorable children and we have about 36 families on our books.

I spent the first half of 2019 keeping to the original tiddlywinks format but during this time I also talked to the team, parents and the diocesan children's advisor to access ways in which we could improve the tiddlywinks experience for all and how to make the link to church greater.

I spent the summer holidays sorting and cleaning toys with the help of my children! And by mid-September we were ready to relaunch! The new format is a little bit more structured. Beginning with play time with a designated baby area and a space to do crafts, a designated snack time around the table, followed by a Bible story and singing time. This new format has been very well received by all who regularly attend.

Over the past year I have really enjoyed time socialising with the parents and children. We had an adult's only meal out at the end of the summer term, which was a massive success and we continued to meet during the summer holidays in various parks in county Durham. The parents really appreciated this as it is a long time to be apart, especially if you are not yet in the school holiday routine.

I would like to say thank you to the wonderful volunteers who enable this ministry to happen: Sarah, Laura, Diane, Bev, Alison, Elizabeth and Carol. We could really do with a few more volunteers to help on a once a month basis. We are not only looking for people to help in the kitchen but also for people to come and talk to the grown-ups and the children who attend. Please pray about this and if it is something you would like to be involved in, please let me know.

Please continue to pray for this ministry as we look for ways of moving forward and for opportunities to speak about and share God's love to the parents, carers and children.

relation to children, young people and vulnerable adults has a role to play in promoting a safer church and this is underpinned by two fundamentals.

Firstly, anyone who has direct contact with or responsibility for the above groups is required to hold an acceptable Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS) certificate which must be renewed every five years. The need for DBS checks was extended by the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy 2019 which required further applications. After some initial teething troubles around Diocesan definitions, Kate Dawson, Operations Manager and DBS verifier, and I have now developed a single, central register of DBS checks which allows us to see both new volunteers and upcoming renewals. We currently have 78 certificated people in the congregation and are awaiting 16 renewals or replies from the accreditation company.

Secondly, robust, good quality training which helps both the understanding of practice guidance and procedures and, more importantly, deepens our understanding and respect for the most vulnerable. At the time of writing, St Nic's has 83 staff and volunteers accredited at the appropriate level in safeguarding via the Church of England's online training. If you haven't done so yet, I would urge you to access the modular training at 'Awareness' level at <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/> and send me a copy of your certificate. Staff and volunteers have also undertaken further in-house training such as on the Volunteer Evening and before Holiday Club.

Keeping a detailed record training and providing a reminder system will be an ongoing task.

Alongside the above, a further priority was the implementation of requirements for volunteering within the Church of England. As well as DBS and training, all new volunteers working with children are expected to sign a Confidential Declaration and to have a Volunteer Agreement. With Kate Swann, these have been compiled and processed along with job descriptions and risk assessments for activities. We have also updated the Volunteer Handbook to include safeguarding guidance around Acceptable Touch, adult/child ratios, anti-bullying and online safety.

A review of the Safer Recruitment of staff to St. Nic's is on-hold as we await the report from the ongoing Church of England Review of recruitment procedures.

The position of our church on the Market Place means that we welcome many visitors, a tiny minority of whom may pose a problem for our congregation. Together with the Welcome Teams and Churchwardens, a protocol for the management of risk posed by visitors was drawn up in October 2019.

There have been a number of issues around behaviour management, dealt with under Safeguarding Policy, which will be reported more fully at the APCM in April 2021.

#### Plans for the coming year?

As mentioned above, once the Church of England provides its findings, we will need to review our own recruitment procedures in the light of that report.

We need to consider safeguarding within church groups working with vulnerable adults and also to look at Lone Working guidance.

#### Messy Events

During the past 12 months we have had 2 messy events, Messy Easter and Messy Christmas. Both were well attended by families in our church and some who are on the fringes.

Lots of sticking, gluing and eating took place at both events and there was opportunity for worship and chance to hear and respond to Bible stories.

Thank you to Sarah Heslop who has been instrumental in the running of these events and for all of the other volunteers who helped to make the event a success, including those that helped to put the church back together again - We really appreciate all that you do.

#### Safeguarding Report

#### Anne Lipscombe

##### Who is the new Parish Safeguarding Officer?

My name is Ann Lipscombe and I was privileged to be asked to take on the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer in August 2019. 'Privileged' and 'safeguarding' may not be words you associate readily but I have worked in safeguarding in schools since its inception and it is a passion. Having retired from the role of Deputy Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Officer in a secondary Academy Trust of six schools in County Durham, I was very pleased to be able to continue to make use of my knowledge and skills on behalf of St. Nic's Church.

I was also delighted that Kate Swann agreed to be the Children's Advocate alongside me to represent our children and offer advice and support to them in safeguarding, as she does so admirably elsewhere in her role.

##### What is Safeguarding?

In its simplest form, Safeguarding is a term used to describe measures to protect children or vulnerable adults so that they live free from abuse, harm and neglect and are empowered to live full and happy lives. These measures include numerous legal, moral and spiritual obligations for the Church as determined by both government and the Church's National Safeguarding Team.

The PCC of St. Nic's takes very seriously the requirement to safeguard all those who attend services and activities organised by the church. We welcome many and we must welcome them safely.

##### What has been happening?

In September 2019, on behalf of the PCC, I undertook an audit of policies and procedures which then formed the basis of an action plan with identified priorities.

All necessary policies and policy statements had been adopted during the summer of 2019 therefore the priority was to ensure that correct procedures were in place for the safe recruitment of staff and volunteers. Everyone who participates in the life of the Church in

As a church, we also need to formulate our response to the Church of England's commitments on Domestic Abuse.

*The PCC has complied this year with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, that is, the duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and young adults.*

#### Eco Group Report

#### Ricard Lilly

Summary of our activity over the year:

- We have established a Web page on the St Nics website entitled 'Environmental Issues'
- We have ensured ring fenced Green Fund as part of the church's bank account which is for donations to support Environmentally linked spending. One intention for this was for people to offset their carbon airmiles, and donate this to the fund.
- We set up a carbon footprint calculator for members of the congregation to use for their own benefit. This hasn't as yet been widely taken up
- We took part in the ministry showcasing event held last year
- We support the PCC with help and advice on environmental and green issues particularly with regard to energy use and churchyard management; looking to get a quote to replace the lights with LED bulbs which could produce a significant electricity cost saving for the church.
- We Planted 3 Hazel trees in the corner of the youth centre garden in conjunction with the childrens' team as part of the Woodland Trust plant a tree day at the end of November.
- We supported the Young people's climate strikes in the market place helping to man a hot drinks stall
- We wrote a group study guide for the Justice strand of Rhythms of Grace of the Community of St Cuthbert on climate justice.

- Meetings took place every 2-3 months until lockdown, then we stopped and resumed in July with monthly zoom meetings which have been shorter and more focussed. These have worked very well
- We Are producing a Regular monthly newsletter which is sent out with the church newsletter and going to be archived on the church website. Currently the group has read the book **"the future we choose"** by Christina Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac and is summarising the book chapter by chapter on the actions that individuals can take to combat climate change. We recommend that everyone should read this.
- We are looking to engage more with the congregation regarding climate change issues over the coming few months
- Anyone wishing to be a part of this group please contact Richard Lilly [richardlilly@btinternet.com](mailto:richardlilly@btinternet.com)

## Gateway World Shop

## Hazel Dobson

Gateway's enthusiastic members of staff Hazel, Ruth, Claire, Judith, Heather and Mike and its dedicated directors Colin, Phil and Sarah have worked really hard over the last year in what was a most difficult time for shops of all descriptions.

Many of our congregation may not know much about the shop and we are often asked by new members to explain about Fair Trade and what we do, and most are really surprised at just how long we have been doing it. Started in 1979 as **The Saturday Shop**, it became **Gateway Crafts Ltd**, and then later adopted the trading name **Gateway World Shop** and also other staff and directors have played an active part in its continuation. Hazel was a board member for 6 years until May 2019 and has attended many meetings and Fair Trade conferences, encouraging others to become members and enjoy the benefits of being a national community of likeminded people.

We are a shop with a difference, as we don't buy our products from an open market and we care deeply about the people who actually produce our crafts and food products.

The majority of our suppliers are members, along with us, of **BAFTS** (British Association for Fair Trade Shops and Suppliers) which is the Fair Trade Network UK for **WFTO** (World Fair Trade Organisation). It was a member of Gateway who started BAFTS way back in 1995 and other staff and directors have played an active part in its continuation. Hazel was a board member for 6 years until May 2019 and has attended many meetings and Fair Trade conferences, encouraging others to become members and enjoy the benefits of being a national community of likeminded people.

The Trustees of Gateway Development Trust are Colin Cuthill, Phil Holmes, Sarah Chandler and Hazel Dobson, together with a number of other supporters who are eligible to vote at AGM's.

## Durham Deanery Synod report

## Angus Goudie

Durham Deanery met three times in the 2019.

St Nic's has had four representatives on Synod: Lorraine Longthorne, Alex Marklew, Helen Lewis and Jeanne Daniels. Helen moved mid-2019. Many thanks for her long and dedicated service as Deanery Secretary. Thanks also to Jeanne who stood down in the Autumn 2019 and the others whose terms have now come to an end.

After many years the Deanery plan was completed including the difficult task of rearranging the structure of ordained ministry in the Deanery to reduce the number of stipendiary (paid) clergy from 11 to 9. The new organisation was agreed with the clergy at a day away in Brancepeth in May, and the plan was submitted to the Bishops council, and accepted in the autumn of 2019.

2 clergy have recently moved so we have achieved the target of 9, although supplemented by other clergy: self-supporting, retired, university etc.

8 of the clergy are working in groups of 2, each group covering several parishes and allowing greater mutual support. St Nic's is not linked to other parishes as we have a larger team and additional ministry with local colleges through the 'discipling-church' plans.

We have had reports on vocations, discipleship and giving as well as opportunities to share our experience and hopes for the church; also updates on the latest decisions by General Synod including a challenging task to make our churches carbon-neutral by 2030.

The working groups on Growth, Poverty and Children reported and there workshops on Poverty and Children. The Growth group needs to be re-formed and all the groups will be re-launched after the Deanery Synod elections in APCMs later in 2020). Ideally all churches should be represented on each of the groups to allow a dynamic link between Deanery and PCC regarding parish priorities and vision. This should allow work at deanery level to share best practice, encourage and facilitate work in our parishes. Membership of the groups will extend beyond elected deanery members with others being co-opted.

If you are keen to be involved in any of the groups please can you consider standing as a parish Deanery rep or make yourself known to the PCC after the elections.

Later in 2020 the new Deanery Synod will also elect lay members of General Synod for the next 5 years, an important election for the future of the Church of England.

The trading relationship between these Fair Trade suppliers and the producers of the crafts and foods they import can make a huge difference to the daily lives of many of the poorest people in the world. By paying fairly for the products, and working with them on such things as design, these people can then work their own way out of poverty and build thriving families and communities. So the annual turnover of Gateway is the most important part of our work, buying from these suppliers and therefore creating a sustainable chain of trade where it is most needed.

There are also some fair traders who, in no small way, also actively support anti-trafficking and anti-slavery projects, raising funds and giving from their profits.

Many of our craft products also have excellent ECO credentials such as beautiful recycled aluminium, jute shopping bags, bamboo socks and recently backpacks and shoppers made from recycled plastic bottles. Fair Trade crafts in general are handmade and shipped not flown, and the producers follow the 10 Principles of Fair Trade, including looking after the environment in which they live, work and get their raw materials from.

Gateway is also a member of **CCSA** (Cathedral and Church Shops Association) so we buy some of our products such as Easter and Christmas cards from our Christian company suppliers. They all also follow ethical paths to trade and you may recognise among them such companies as The Leprosy Mission, Compassion and Roman Inc.

Locally we are a member of Durham BID, networking within our city community and taking part where appropriate. We have been Independent Shop of the Year and 3 times Durham in Bloom Best Dressed Window (Using Your Own Products). It does take a bit of extra effort but it gets St Nic's recognition for caring about all people everywhere. Everyone on the Gateway team is privileged to be part of a ministry of St Nic's.

## Gateway Development Trust Ltd

## Hazel Dobson

In 1992 the Charities Commission decided that charities and trading companies should be separated, so Gateway split into the two organizations that exist today – **Gateway Crafts Ltd** and **Gateway Development Trust Ltd**. So the Trust owns the shares in the trading company, and the trading company donates to the Trust when it can. The Trust then uses this money to grant aid charitable organizations in the developing world, the majority of which will have a direct link with the shop through a supplier, such as Traidcraft. Over the years we have supported many projects which we know have made a huge difference to the lives of our brothers and sisters across the world who, without the Fair Trade movement, would not survive.

## Prayer Ministry Report

## Claire Elwood

Prayer Ministry has long been a part of our Sunday services and there are some long serving, dedicated volunteers who serve our congregation in this way. This past year has seen some change. We have held two training sessions to enable new people to join the existing teams and to offer a refresher to any team members who wanted it. These have been well attended and our teams for 11am and 6.30pm have received a welcome boost in participants.

I would like to express my gratitude to Chris and Ruth Stokes for their years of commitment to overseeing this ministry. Jeff and Angie Hattan have ably stepped into their shoes to oversee the 11am team. David Lewis and Tom Musson oversee the 6.30pm team. Hopefully this year will see the development of a team for the 9am.

People who are new to the teams are paired with more experienced pray-ers and it is exciting to see people grow in faith as they learn to stand with people in prayer.

My grateful thanks to everyone who contributes their time, compassion and sensitive listening to this privileged ministry.

## Update

Whilst prayer ministry is offered remotely at the end of online services, we cannot under current restrictions offer it as part of our services within the building. However, thanks to the sterling work of Mary Anne, our congregation receives regular phone calls and offers of prayer so we know that prayer continues and that thankfully, restrictions are no barrier to the work of the Holy Spirit. So we pray on!

## International Mission Report

## Marc Ghosh

Supporting the spread of the Gospel around the world has long been an important part of our

ministry at St. Nicholas Church. We offer support in prayer and financially. The PCC makes regular donations to the mission agencies supported by St. Nics, details of which are in the Annual Financial Report.

A prayer meeting for our mission projects is held each month when anyone interested is invited to join us in praying for our mission partners. Occasionally members of St Nics take part in short term mission projects abroad. Anyone doing so is invited to inform IMC so that we can pray for them at the monthly prayer meeting.

These are the projects and mission agencies we support at St Nics:-

**LATVIA BIBLICAL CENTRE**

Founded on February 6th 1992 as Riga International Bible Institute; Latvia Biblical Centre (LBC) is led by Victor and Esther Petrenko who belonged to St Nics between 1996 and 2006 while each was studying for a PhD at Durham University. LBC exists to train Latvian Christian leaders, both lay and ordained. During the Soviet era Christianity was strongly opposed by the authorities and no training was available for Christian leaders. After the fall of communism freedom of religion was established but the church was very weak and the leaders had little knowledge of the Bible. LBC has contributed significantly to Biblical teaching in Latvia for the last 25 years.

LBC is now spreading beyond Riga, with courses held in poorer parts of Latvia enabling those who cannot afford to travel to Riga to take part in training in their own town.

A few years ago a derelict building was given to LBC and by God's provision over one million Euros was provided in answer to prayer in order to renovate the building. Named after the nineteenth century Latvian evangelist William Fetler, the building is now complete and serving as a Christian centre containing LBC and offices for other Christian organisations.

#### **CMS – Church Mission Society**

*A community of people in mission who want the world to know Jesus.*

#### **LATIN AMERICA**

St Nics supports Bible translation in two South American languages. This is about giving people the best resource for knowing God—in a language that speaks to their minds and hearts. Michael Browne, in Argentina, is translating the Bible into the Toba language and Tim Curtis, in Paraguay, has translated the Bible into Enxet and is now building the church in the Chaco region.

The Toba New Testament is already available and Michael is now working, with a team of translators, on the Old Testament. Finding the right Toba word which describes accurately what the Bible is saying is often very difficult and Michael is constantly checking texts. Michael visited St Nics in January 2019.

Over thirty years Tim Curtis has overseen the translation of the whole Bible into Enxet. The Bibles have now been printed. However, it does not stop there and Tim is now engaged in discipleship building. Many of the Enxet people are illiterate so Tim is organising the distribution of “proclaimers”, each proclaimer holds a recording of the Bible and is capable of playing the recording at high volume to a large number of people. Tim has also started to translate Bible study notes into Enxet to help those who can read come closer to Christ.

#### **AFRICA -RWANDA**

Manasseh Tuyizere is Diocesan Administrator for the Diocese of Kigale in Rwanda, a country with deep tribal divisions and a history of violence and genocide. The church is playing a leading role in developing a more stable and united society. The key to Rwanda's future is its

young people who make up a large proportion of the population; over 60% of the population are under 25 years old. Manasseh is developing programmes to reach out to the young people of Rwanda.

Manasseh's wife, Catrin, is working with the Diocesan Education Department helping to develop early years education.

#### **AFRICA-UGANDA**

The Bungokho Rural Development Centre (BRDC) centre, which is led by Davis Mananna, is a Church Army Africa project within the Diocese of Mbale in the east of Uganda. BRDC combines training in practical job related skills with Christian growth and evangelism. The centre serves some of the poorest people in Uganda.

#### **THE BIBLE SOCIETY**

*The Bible is more than a book; it is full of human stories — of love, greed, joy, loss and passion. It's vital to our culture. It's part of the answer to the world's needs. It's cherished by billions of people around the world. It's more than a book.*

The work of The Bible Society extends beyond distributing the Bible as a book. They have an extensive multi-media department producing films, Scripture portions and magazines all portraying Bible stories. The Bible Society presents the Bible in formats suitable for all, including those with physical and learning disabilities. In recent years The Bible Society has launched the “Open the Book” project which operates throughout the World. Volunteers go into primary schools to introduce children to The Bible using drama and other creative means to bring the Bible to life. Some members of St Nics are involved in “Open the Book”.

#### **MISSION AVIATION FELLOWSHIP**

Fiona Stevenson was a member of St Nics for five years before the Lord called her to join Mission Aviation Fellowship as a Finance Manager. In 2018 Fiona became the Finance Manager in Papua New Guinea, a mountainous country where there are many isolated tribal communities. MAF is a lifeline both spiritually and physically for people living in remote areas. Doctors, Teachers and Missionaries are flown in to assist people who live in poverty and in fear of witchcraft.

In Papua New-Guinea MAF conducts around 500 medevacs a year, distributes 4,000 Bibles, and carries 1.5 million tonnes of freight (building material, food, and school supplies).

#### **THE STAMP BOX**

There is a box for used stamps near the chapel. These are donated to Leprosy Mission who sell the stamps to raise funds.

#### **Alpha Report**

#### **Claire Elwood**

Alpha comes but once a year and this January was no exception. We have had a good number of guests exploring the fundamentals of faith and what it means to be part of a Christian community through sharing meals together, video and discussion. It has been a privilege and a joy to watch our guests grow in understanding and witness to the changes they can see in themselves as they draw closer to Jesus. Most have been attending Sunday services and have progressed into Spiritual Support Groups thus enabling themselves to grow further as disciples of Christ. We have appreciated the prayers of the church so much as we have progressed through the course, thank you.

Many hands make light work and so my enormous thanks to our ordinand, David Lucas and our incredible team of group leaders, plus all our wonderful bakers who have provided us with dessert each week. A special thank you must go to Diane Armstrong who kicked us off with an amazing menu on the first week. And last but not least, my thanks to Steven, for his help in the kitchen each week with the washing up.

It would be so good to offer Alpha more than once a year. If you would like to be involved with this fantastic ministry in the future then please be in touch with me.

Who could have foreseen that Covid 19 would give us the ideal opportunity to run Alpha once more this year, this time on-line?! What a joy to run Alpha again! The A Team this time comprised David Lucas, Phil and Sarah Alsop, Ann Lipscombe and Sam Chapman and our change in circumstances made for a change in format. As the meal was gone, we looked for a different way to share fellowship together. Each member of the team told their faith story after the discussion and we had a few guest speakers also. We found invitations were taken up with more ease as guests joined us from their homes, whether that was locally, the West Midlands or France! Most of our guests have progressed into Spiritual Support Groups. For them, hearing the myriad of ways people are called into faith by Christ has been a highlight of each week; they have also been keen watchers of the faith story section on our church website. Thank you once again for all your prayers; please remember them as they continue their discipleship journey with us.

#### **Recovery Group**

#### **Tim and Fay Biddlecombe**

The St. Nic's Recovery Group core purpose is to support and mentor people in recovery from alcohol and drug addiction.

This ministry encompasses a range of activities to support people in recovery but this year we have seen an increasing need to support their family and friends too. This can be offering a listening ear but also signposting them to support services that will help their loved ones. In June last year, we hosted an event at St. Nic's for the family, friends and

colleagues who are supporting people in addiction. In our presentations, Tim outlined what addiction is and what it looked like. Some of our Recovery Group shared their story of addiction and Fay talked about what it is like to live with someone in addiction. Feedback from those attending the event was very positive, especially about those sharing their stories. We also invited over a dozen support agencies to the event who outlined the support they offer to those in addiction and their families. There was a real buzz as people talked to the agencies represented and collected information and contacts on the support that they could provide.

Over the year there has been a change in how we run our regular group meetings. We decided to provide a more faith-focussed home-based group for our core members, which has proved effective and we have been studying 'The Lord's Prayer' during these sessions.

In the summer, members of our Recovery Group joined with PadB based in Chester-le-Street, who also work with people in recovery, for a charity walk along St. Oswald's Way – this year the theme was Vikings and Monks which was quite a sight along the narrow paths of Northumberland! Again, our friends, family and members of St. Nic's were very generous and we raised more funds to support this ministry in St. Nic's.

We continue to provide support to the wider recovery community in a more 'reactive' way and have continued to provide furniture and household goods as appropriate. As the recovery journey is a series of ups and down for many in our community, we still find it necessary to provide an emergency response at times whether this is a food voucher, travel expenses, phone card or even court fees! We have also had the privilege of offering specialist therapeutic counselling to specific members of our group which has proved invaluable and a real turning point for some who have been struggling with their addiction for prolonged periods of time.

It has been another busy year and Tim and Fay would like to thank the Recovery Group support group for their continued prayer, support, and advice – thank you Dick, Chris, Janet, Arun, Chris and Paul! Dick will be stepping down from his role as Chair of our support group soon and we would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank him for believing in us when we began this work, his on-going passion for this ministry and his wise counsel for us over the years!

#### **Pastoral Work at St Nic's**

#### **Philip Brooks**

During the last year Claire Elwood and Mary Anne Freer have joined the Pastoral Team in offering pastoral support at St Nic's. Mary Anne's considerable pastoral skills are being enhanced through participating in the Diocesan sponsored Lindisfarne Pastoral Ministry Course.

At the end of December 2019 Alston Swarbrick and Susan Hill decided not to renew their formal participation in the Pastoral Team, though their caring nature will continue to be a

blessing to St Nics. A great big thank you is appropriate to Alison and Susan for all the dedicated work that they have done over these last five years.

Rather than meeting monthly for a meeting, Arun, Claire, Mary Anne and Philip now communicate regularly about visits and needs through a WhatsApp group. This enables speedier communication and avoids unnecessary duplication of visits.

The group is contributing to the preparations for Pastoral Care during the Coronavirus Pandemic.

"Well Prepared" is a discussion based course from Oxford Diocese that we have been using each Monday of Lent to help us think about death and dying. Practical topics such as will making have been intertwined with wider discussion about legacy of memory and what we choose to leave behind. All of those who have attended have appreciated the space to explore a topic we all struggle to talk about but nonetheless need to be prepared for.

The Pastoral Team aim to offer support where it is needed when people are ill, bereaved or in other type of need. It is always a privilege to walk alongside people in a time of need and to pray with them and for them. We recognize that much of the pastoral support in St Nic's goes on in small groups or between members of the congregation but if you know of a need that isn't being met or you think the pastoral team should be aware of a situation please get in touch.

Philip can be contacted via the link on the newsletter.

### Small Groups Report

Claire Elwood

A year ago, Arun and I visited many of the existing small groups with a view to communicating the vision of the Community of St. Cuthbert and the role of Spiritual Support Groups within that. A few groups embraced the vision and concept and have worked with our Rhythms of Grace to restructure their groups along the lines of SSGs. Some groups were less keen and have continued to meet as usual, providing fellowship, support and bible study to their groups. Zoe led the fuller development of SSGs within our student community which, on the whole, has been very successful. Our MEVs, Chloe and Tom, helped produce resource materials for the use of SSGs and small groups based on our five rhythms of study, prayer, justice, hospitality and evangelism; material was provided by a number of staff and congregational members.

Then Covid 19 put us into lockdown. This led to a greater pastoral input from an ever-increasing team of callers and practical helpers, ably led by Mary Anne Freer. A few groups have managed since some lifting of restrictions to meet in gardens over the summer months or have rapidly gained skills in meeting online via Zoom.

Over the summer months, both the arrival of new people to Durham and the moving away of others has presented us with the happy challenge of too few leaders for the number of

### Women's Groups

Caroline Boardman

It was about 33 years ago that Louise McGowan, wife of the then curate at St Nic's (Alistair McGowan), opened her home on Providence Row to women in Durham to get together during the daytime for Christian fellowship. Women from a variety of churches (and countries), often accompanied by babies and pre-school children, met each week for Bible study and prayer. Since that time the group moved further down Providence Row, grew and multiplied, said farewell to many and welcomed more, and continues to meet regularly today with members coming from St Nic's, but also from other churches within the city.

At present we have 27 members, across three groups. All groups aim to provide a warm welcome, fellowship, support and prayer for women of a variety of ages. We meet on Thursday mornings each week during school term-time at the homes of members. Each group follows its own programme throughout the year although leaders meet regularly to share ideas and resources. At least once a term the groups meet together for a joint activity. In October we joined together in a communion service in the chapel at St Nic's and enjoyed coffee and fellowship at the Coffee Lounge, plus a chance to support Gateway World Shop by shopping there. We looked ahead to Advent at the end of November with a morning of reflection and Christmas craft in the Upper Hall. In February we met together for Communion and Cake in the Youth Centre. We look forward to our annual Summer Get-together in the Summer term. We are always glad to welcome any women who would like to join one of our groups. Thursday mornings seem to be very special for each of our members.

### Music Ministry Report

Jane Todd

*'Worship is the most powerful, joy producing, hope sustaining, life altering thing a person can do' (James McDonald)*

This year has seen many changes at St Nic's, including with regards to how our sung worship is organised. This time last year, I was on maternity leave after having Alfie, due to return to my duties as 11am Worship Leader in the September. In July, Arun was reviewing staffing and organisation in general, but particularly due to our commission to become a 'Resource Church'. As part of this re-organisation and funding, an amount of money was available that could be used to fund a paid music post at Church.

In October, Sam Rankin was appointed as Music co-ordinator, taking on my role of Worship Leader at the 11am and also some wider music responsibilities. During this term it was also exciting that Logan Williams started our Community Choir.

January saw further change with the 4pm family service being relocated to 11am on the first week of the month. We thanked Annabelle for her hard work in leading the youth band, and this baton was passed on to Sam. There was also change for the 9am service with Tony Harries moving to Cornwall, so with Sam taking on the 11am, Chris Wagstaffe returned to heading up music for the 9am.

My role is to oversee the music activities at Church, and to support the music leaders for each service. As part of this we had an 'Away Day' at Crimdon in January for Sam, Chris,

people wishing to become involved fully with the life of St. Nics through SSGs. Grace and patience from those waiting has been invaluable but the challenge remains.

The questions for each of us not currently part of a SSG are:

- Have I become too cosy in my group and would benefit from fresh challenge?
- Is it time for my group to get on board with the vision of the church?
- Is it time for my group to self assess how many of us have leadership ability and could therefore respond to the need for leaders?
- Is it time I was part of a SSG?
- Can I let the office know that I will be ready to join a SSG now/next month/in the New Year?

As we head into the autumn, we have had the enormous pleasure of welcoming Richard Briggs as our Prior of the Community of St. Cuthbert. Richard initially joins us in a self-supporting capacity, continuing his role at Cranmer College. As we look to grow our discipleship, we anticipate that Richard's creative input and immense ability will inspire the development and take up of SSGs even more.

### Coffee Lounge Report

David Lucas

The coffee lounge continues to be a staple of daytime ministry at Nics. It offers Christian hospitality to a diverse group of people including regular guests, visitors to Durham, shoppers, discipleship groups, and friends just meeting up together. Many are looking for someone to talk to. All are assured of a warm, friendly greeting and will be treated with dignity. The team of dedicated volunteers work very hard to ensure we're able to open six days a week, but this is becoming more and more of a challenge. Over the past year we've had to close several times due to a shortage of helpers. It has been very heartening to see coffee lounge volunteers step up to help fill in spaces in the Rota as the need has arisen. Joyce Batey has continued to organize the volunteer Rota and her work is very much appreciated by all.

In the autumn, Alison Morton stepped down from leading Coffee lounge after 10 years in the role. We are very grateful for her years of loving service leading Coffee Lounge. Alison continues to Organize the monthly Afternoon Tea, and still volunteers at Coffee Lounge on Fridays. Mev's Chloe Langham, and Tom Musson, as well as ordinand David Lucas, have taken on the role from Alison.

In the past months, several changes were made to the layout of Coffee Lounge. This has included what is displayed on the table tops as well as where the tables are located. Real flowers now adorn each table, and the information packs now contain a Gospel of Luke, updated prayer cards and information pertaining to ministry at St Nics, including Alpha. Furthermore, the new layout of tables has opened up access to the Chapel for those seeking a time of prayer.

Seth and myself. We started the day with a beautiful walk on the beach, enjoying the fresh air and stunning views, and centring ourselves before settling down to a time of bible study, prayer and planning.

In February we held one of our 'band days', a chance for our musicians and singers from across the different services to come together for teaching and worship. It was also an opportunity for others from the church to explore joining in with music ministry.

In March, a group from the Church were supposed to be attending Emu's 'Word in Song' Conference. Unfortunately this was when we first went into lockdown and the conference was cancelled.

COVID, and the subsequent move to closing our Church building and moving our services online has brought it's challenges, but I would particularly like to thank all the technical team whose support has allowed our musicians to record material remotely to be used in services.

We continue to pray for what Church and sung worship may 'look like' post-COVID, and pray that we will be faithful, and brave, in stepping out and exploring new avenues in these changing times.

### 9am Music Group

Chris Wagstaffe

We enjoy leading the sung worship at the 9am service, and encouraging the congregation to praise God through music. We continue to use a variety of musical forms with substantial organ input. The group includes piano, guitar, accordion, flutes, mandolin and bodhran (an Irish drum), so we can produce a distinctly "folk" style for the songs, and sing four-part harmony to give a strong lead in the hymns.

We meet for practice and a time of sharing and prayer at 7.30 pm each Friday night. As well as preparing for the Sunday service, it has been useful to use some of this time to learn new material – enjoying opportunities to play and sing together.

The group has maintained its long-standing links with the annual tent mission in Pity Me. Members of the group also form a cellidh band and have again played for a number of church and secular engagements over the year. This is a useful way to raise money for the church and other charities.

It is a great privilege and joy for us to be able to lead the music and we would welcome newcomers who would like to share in this ministry.

### Update

The group has continued to meet online on Friday evenings at the time we would normally have practised. This has been very useful for keeping in touch and supporting individual members in prayer. We have also met for a picnic and an outdoor worship session

(following Covid restrictions!) Some members of the group have also led sung worship at the online and live services.

### 11am Worship Report

Sam Rankin

I've very much enjoyed my time as music and worship coordinator for the 11am service since taking on the role in November 2019. I feel well settled, and trusted by both the staff team and the congregation. I am grateful for the support and cooperation of the volunteer musicians within the church, and I am encouraged by the wealth of talent, experience and faithfulness I've encountered in the course of my ministry so far.

It was clear to me, when accepting the role, that our church leadership was seeking immediate stability and consistency in corporate worship at the 11am service (with smaller musical ensembles if required). I think that I was able to provide this by leading sung worship on a near weekly basis for a number of months in the expectation of building a regular rota of musicians and other leaders in the new year. My hope was - and still is - to grow a fruitful volunteer based worship ministry that could thrive without my leading sung worship weekly and without demanding too much of any one volunteer. In partnership with Arun, Jane Todd, Chris Wagstaffe and Seth Price I felt that we made positive steps in realising that vision around the new year: hosting a band day in church for all those interested in participating in the worship ministry; creating a new database of each volunteer's skills, interests and availability; creating and beginning a four-week rota of set bands, integrating musicians of different ages and experience levels. I feel this was going well, though progress was obviously hampered by the covid pandemic.

As with so much else, the worship ministry during lockdown has looked different. It has returned to a model of my leading sung worship on a near-weekly basis, pre-recording songs for online services. The reasons for this are numerous. I am fortunate in being experienced and equipped to record music at home in a way that other similarly able worship leaders in our church are not. The decision to record mostly alone was based on my experiences and those of worship leaders at other churches; the work, time and technical knowledge required to remotely record an ensemble quickly multiplies to the point of diminishing returns. I still felt able to contribute to the corporate worship of the church through these pre-recordings, and I'm satisfied that it provided the most realistic solution while the 10am service was solely broadcast online.

The restrictions placed upon the church since returning to the building have necessitated that our worship ensembles remain small, led either by an individual or a pair of musicians. I am likely to continue leading sung worship on my own for a while until the restrictions ease, at which point I hope we will start to return to the rota that promised so much before the lockdown in March. I am also taking on greater responsibility for the sung worship at the evening service going forwards, where I am hopeful of setting up a similar rota of volunteers. I am particularly keen to recruit and support new worship leaders from among our student body where I feel there is much untapped potential. We have great resources at St Nic's, and I am excited to see the worship ministry grow across the church. Praise God!

regularly able to ring all 6 bells before the Sunday morning service, occasional evening services, and our weekly Wednesday practice from 7.30 till 9 pm. We are particularly grateful for the help from ringers from other towers in Durham and beyond.

Recently we've been able to recruit one former and a few current Durham university students to our ranks, including Rachel Sanderson and Michael Anderson who have been elected as tower secretary and quarter peal secretary, respectively. As ever, any group or individual would be more than welcome to visit us by arrangement, to find out more about what we do and why, and have a go. Equally anyone who has rung in the past would be very welcome to give it another go! Please contact [nicsbells@gmail.com](mailto:nicsbells@gmail.com).

### Flower Team Report

Judy Lowther and Rosemary Day.

Our flower team has worked hard again this year, keeping the church decorated with flowers for the services week by week, as well as Christmas and Easter. Mostly we work independently or with one other person, but on the major festivals a band of us get together to provide a larger display. On occasions we will decorate the church for weddings or do special arrangements in memory of a loved one. We all find this a very rewarding experience, and a way of using the gifts God gives us to help make his church an attractive place to be. Some have even found it a life changing experience, working in the quiet of the church using a God-given gift never recognised before.

We are, however, a diminishing team and we have lost more members this year for very understandable reasons, and are very stretched at the moment. It has been heart warming to find members of the team prepared to take on more slots than usual to keep the church attractive for those who come in Sunday by Sunday, or during the week. *But we need you! Even men!* Many people tell us they have no gifts at all in the area of flower arranging, but if you talk to any of the team they will tell you that once upon a time they were in the same position and never believed they could do it. If you would like to try it out, there would certainly be a regular member who would be more than willing to help.

### Lumiere Report

Claire Elwood

The vision for our involvement with Lumiere 2019 was to host a simple Acoustic Café with an engagement installation in the chapel; a warm, dry place of welcome, a time to invite people to our Christmas services and engage with them over the question, "Who is Jesus?" As we fleshed out this plan, volunteers came forward and the teams formed. Our MEVs, Chloe and Tom each led a team, hospitality and chapel respectively, with David Lucas, ordinand, helping Tom. Mary Anne led the welcome team. There were invitations to hand out for our Christmas services and Alpha in the New Year and the chapel team had Gospels to give away too. Our live music was provided by our own very talented worship leaders from the 6.30pm service, in this context known as Brittan's Band; Sam Rankin and friends from St. Thomas, Newcastle; our very own Logan with his friend Lydia, called themselves Lydogan. They each played for 2x20 minute sets both nights.

I'd like to finish my report by giving a special mention to the tech team volunteers at St Nic's. They have been nothing but welcoming, cheerful, competent and supportive since I arrived. They are a huge credit to the church, and have made such a positive contribution to the worship ministry. I am so grateful for them!

### 6:30pm Worship Band Ministry Report

Seth Price

I, presumably like many of those giving ministry reports this year, write this in the midst of unprecedented times; the challenges and successes of the 6:30 worship band over the last twelve months are shown in new light in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which, despite its indiscriminate disruption, affords a chance for reflection on certain aspects of ministry. At the time of writing all forms of band activity have ceased except for Logan's worship leading for the recorded/livestreamed 6:30 service. As frustrating as this is for the band (not least me!), I have begun to recognise that this might be an opportunity to simply sing worship without direct musical responsibility; such occasions are important but infrequent for many of the musicians in 'normal' time. Personally, during this time, I have reflected on our times of prayer during band rehearsals. This year I have found myself praying particularly about the privilege that it is to lead God's people in sung worship. It is a wonderful mercy that we are able to use our gifts to serve those who sing at the evening service and it is by God's grace that we are given a responsibility to use these gifts well. As I am constantly thanking God for his guidance, I seek to follow his prompting for how we are to develop as a ministry and become more like Jesus. One of the ways that this has manifested itself this year has been in the growth of the team; it has been an important year in raising up new leaders of worship. As a specific example, four musicians have led worship (that is, have been in charge of the band on a given Sunday evening) who hadn't done so before September. All are growing in confidence in their worship leading and will, no doubt, continue to serve us in this way. On a practical level, they have been supported by me (e.g. in admin, song choices, rehearsals etc.) and been given structured feedback afterwards. We have also grown numerically; welcome to those who have joined the 6:30 band! Encouragingly, among the new faces are musicians who have returned to church music after not having sung or played in a while. It has been great to see these people grow in confidence in their instruments and leading too. Another development since September is the new formalised relationship between the different bands. I am thankful to be able to work closely with Sam, Jane, and Chris as we coordinate musical worship across the church. I think I speak not only for myself when I say that we are looking forward to the time when we can create joyful music together again! Until then, we look to Christ, who gives and takes away the privilege of leading worship.

### Bell Ringers

Michael Lamb

The bell ringers at St Nicholas are a mixed group of church members and non-church goers, young and old, keeping the 300+ year old bells ringing and calling people to worship. We are

Involvement with Lumiere went beyond our own doors as it became clear that we could support the local community by involving Handcrafted and Gateway shop. Men from the Handcrafted charity came in to see their sign, Jesus Loves Durham, sitting in the front porch; they were really chuffed to see it lit up in situ with lots of people taking photos of it. Many visitors commented on how great it was that it matched the Snow Globe sign: I Love Durham - entirely the Lord's Work as I had no idea what would be in the snow globe. Gateway shop took the opportunity to turn a good profit on the Friday and Saturday nights.

There were many comments on our friendly atmosphere and welcome, how church should always be this much fun; many who had always wanted to come in but never had, so were enjoying seeing the church from the inside. Visiting friends were astonished this was our first attempt as it looked so well organised and professional. Clergy coming after a diocesan conference were excited and inspired to see what we were doing. A group of teenagers summed it up well: "It was mint! The best part of the night!"

My heartfelt thanks to everyone who made our participation in Lumiere such a success. The general consensus is that we must do this again in 2021 so if you missed joining in the fun this time, please consider how you can be involved next time.

### Ministry Report

Chloe Langham

1. Community of St Cuthbert
2. Alpha
3. Market Chaplaincy
4. Coffee Lounge
5. Sunday Involvement
6. Children's Ministry
7. Youth Mission Week
8. Student Ministry
9. Fun Committee
10. Studying

### Community of St Cuthbert

During the winter I wrote some sessions on Hospitality. Since January, together with Brandon, I have been compiling the monthly magazine editions of the Community of St Cuthbert resources. Various people have generously given their time to write these resources and it has been one of my great pleasures to compile these into an easy-to-use booklet to be distributed to all the Spiritual Support Groups. It is also available on the church website.

Last time I wrote to you I was preparing to meet with my group for the first time. I am pleased to report that it is going well. We have had a few teething problems such as identifying the best times to meet together, and we have been missing the pleasure of an in-depth bible study but we have decided to do that alongside the Community of St Cuthbert so to feed the 'study' part of our rhythms sufficiently. My group is entirely made up of

students, three of which are due to graduate this summer. I would appreciate your prayers specifically for them at this uncertain time as they navigate finishing their degrees alongside the changes that come with graduating, all amongst the uncertainty that we are all experiencing at this unsettling time.

#### Alpha

Since January I have been involved with our Alpha course. I had a lovely table of people that I led alongside Mary Anne Freer and James Cochran. We were joined by a young Catholic man from Amigos who was interested in exploring more about the Church of England. We were also joined by two students and another lady who has recently started to attend St Nics with her family. As we were all Christians, in some understanding, it meant we were able to have in-depth conversations about what it means to pray, and honest conversations about where people were at with reading the bible, alongside various other topics also.

#### Market Chaplaincy

Recently Claire and I have been attending the indoor market every two-weeks with the aim of getting to know the market stall owners better. I have greatly enjoyed building relationships with them and they are beginning to open up to having slightly more personal conversations. In our last visit, some were particularly concerned about the impact of corona virus on their businesses, alongside the fact that general business has not been so good in recent weeks. I look forward to spending more time with them soon.

#### Coffee Lounge

Since I last wrote to you, we have made a few minor changes to coffee lounge including changing the layout to allow access to the chapel (although use of the chapel has now been put on hold whilst the repairs are carried out), I have also updated all of the coffee lounge packs to include more information about what we do as a church and I have created a new set of prayer cards with the idea that people who visit the coffee lounge can take them away with them if they find one particularly helpful. David, Tom and I are currently looking into rebranding the Coffee Lounge, although this is a much longer project.

#### Sunday Involvement

My Sunday involvement has changed slightly in recent months. Until we halted all catering in light of COVID-19, I still helped Tom to serve coffee between the morning services. However, I also have been spending some time with a few members of the 9am to teach them how to use the AV system with the goal of equipping members of the congregation to do it rather than merely filling in the rotas when I can. I have also started to play in the 11am worship band once a month on my violin, which is a new adventure, and lots of fun with Sam leading.

I have been helping to fill Sunday rotas by moving some of them to ChurchSuite, so that it can be centrally organised. I have also been looking at ways for children to be registered this way for their groups also, but this is still something that we are exploring as a team.

Last week I finished lecture at Cranmer Hall. I greatly enjoyed the modules that I studied, and still have a few essays that need writing before the end of next month!

Alongside this, we have continued the in-house teaching with classes from Janet McHugh on prayer, David Day on preaching, Anne Harrison on music and theology, and Colin Paterson on conflict. These sessions have both been very interesting, and also allowed us the opportunity to spend time with people in the congregation that we don't always have an opportunity to.

#### Treasurer's Report

#### Sarah Alsop

The ministries of St Nic's as outlined in the Ministry Reports are underpinned by the generous giving of the members of St Nic's, not only financially but also in terms of their time and talents. Thank you, on behalf of St Nic's PCC, for all you have contributed for the benefit of the body of Christ here at St Nic's.

For a detailed financial review, please see the Financial Review Section of the Trustees Annual Report for 2019.

For details of how to give, please see the Giving Section on our website or hit the DONATE button.

Having served as Treasurer for the past seven years, it is now time for me to retire. It has been an honour to serve in this way. Thank you so much for your support.

On 8<sup>th</sup> March I had the opportunity to preach at the 9am service. Although my sermon was very short in the end, I was fairly pleased with how it went and was grateful for the support of those that were there.

#### Children's Ministry

I have continued to be involved with the children's ministry, helping and leading Sparkly Stars and Illuminate during the 11am service.

I was also involved in the planning for the Holiday Club which we held in February half-term. I helped Kate Swann to move all sign-ups to an online system which enabled easy access and protection of the information that we needed to keep. I also was involved in other ways such as supervising the leaders' children each morning, registering all the children upon their arrive and reuniting them with their parents at the end of each morning, and I also sewed the balcony cover.

#### Youth Mission Week

In conjunction with Kate Swann and LeAnne Davis I have been part of planning a youth mission week for May half-term. We have invited some people from *The Message Trust* to lead a week of encouraging our youth to get involved in mission in Durham. I look forward to sharing more plans with you as they are confirmed.

#### Student Ministry

This term has seen me continue to be involved in student ministry, as I was in my own time as a student as a leader of one of the two student small groups that existed at the time. I have been meeting a student to read the bible together, which she hasn't done much before, which has been a great pleasure to see her grow and to be able to answer some of her big questions and point her to other sources of information to figure out those things for herself. I have also been more involved in student night, leading a table discussion and helping with the tech when necessary.

Towards the end of term I was involved in planning the Student Prayer and Praise night and the Student Weekend Away, but sadly neither of these were able to go ahead.

#### Fun Committee

Suggested by Arun at the beginning of the academic year, a small group of people have been gathered together to organise some social events for the church. We have had two meetings, and despite needing to postpone current plans, we are hoping that a few will be able to go ahead in the coming months. To give you an idea, here is our current plan for the academic year, if these are able to go ahead:

25<sup>th</sup> April at 2.30pm – Bluebell Walk  
17<sup>th</sup> May at 1pm – BBQ on the Sands  
13<sup>th</sup> June at 9am – Pilgrims Walk  
10<sup>th</sup> July at 7pm – Ceilidh at church

#### Studying