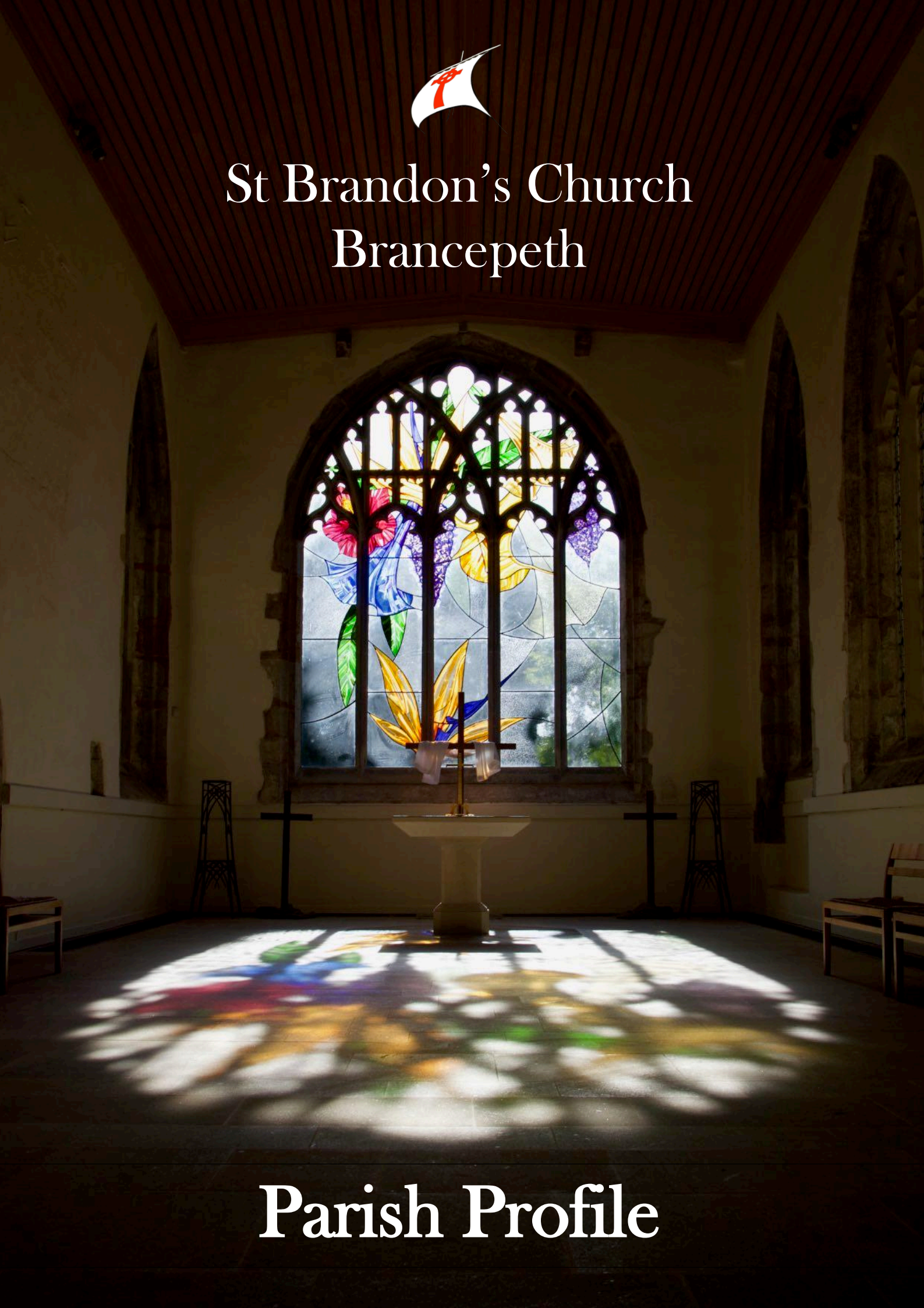




# St Brandon's Church Brancepeth



## Parish Profile



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## Overview

We are a village church just outside Durham with an active and engaged congregation. We seek to worship God and to share God's love with one another and with everyone around us.

We work together to sustain a rich liturgical life, a strong tradition of preaching, an ethos of welcome and inclusion, rich engagement with our local and wider community, and generous giving.

We are looking for someone who will recognise and make the most of our collaborative ethos, our place in the wider community, and our beautiful building and our setting - and work with us to discern the next steps that God has for us.





## Our new priest-in-charge

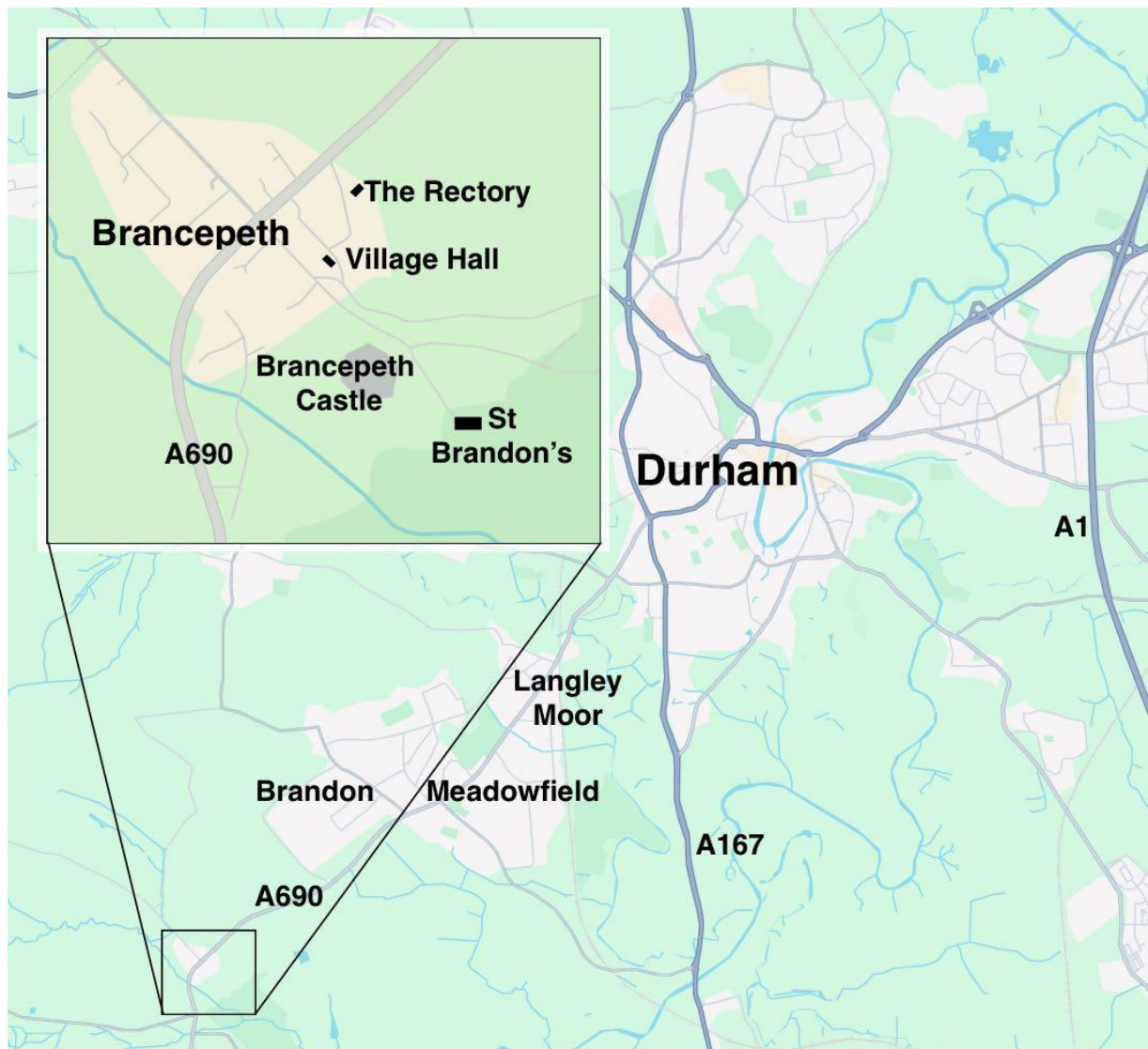
We are looking for

- someone who will help us sustain and develop the rich liturgical life and the strong tradition of preaching that characterise our worship, keeping a focus on God at the heart of our life together;
- someone who will attend prayerfully to the life of the congregation, of the village, and of the wider local community, encouraging our shared discernment of how God is at work here and what God is calling us to do and to be;
- someone who will contribute to our discernment of how to engage more richly and generously with the whole village and the wider local community, in the light of the good news of God's love shown to us in Jesus – and so someone who will become fully part of the life of the village as well as of the church;
- someone who will help us face together the challenge of strengthening our work with children and young people, and who will not be discouraged by the small numbers currently involved;
- someone who will uphold our commitment to being a welcoming and inclusive community, where people who are marginalised or excluded in wider society, including LGBTIQA+ people and immigrants, can know that they fully belong;
- someone who will work closely with the many here who are already enthusiastic contributors to the life of the church and the village, and so someone willing and able to accept others' help and to share the leadership of this community;
- someone who will encourage and harness the help of those who are not yet so involved, helping them to find and to exercise the gifts God has given them to build up our common life;
- someone who will also bring their own ideas, enthusiasms, and energy, and so be able to encourage and challenge us to do things differently, to further God's kingdom here; and
- someone who will not try to do more than the time available with us allows, and so someone who knows how to manage their time, who is appropriately clear about boundaries, and who is serious about taking time off.

We recognise that whoever comes will have more to contribute in some of these areas than others; we are not expecting someone who can address all of them, or who can address any of them alone. We are a habitually collaborative community, and we are looking for someone who will work with us in shared discernment of the next steps in our journey.

## Our location

Brancepeth is a small village surrounded by countryside, but it lies only ten minutes south-west of Durham by car, along the A690. There are good transport links to the city (including a regular bus service) and from the city to the wider country (with Durham being just off the A1, and less than three hours by train from London).



## Worship

The life of St Brandon's is given focus by our weekly services and by the annual pattern of our festivals. We see those services as a context in which we can encounter the love of God poured out for us in Jesus, and in which we can go on discovering how, empowered by the Spirit, we can inhabit and share that love together.

Our 10.15 Common Worship services on Sundays are normally eucharists, though we occasionally hold Services of the Word. We enjoy both well-constructed liturgy and good preaching. Our sung worship is anchored by the organ, with some support from the piano. Occasional items are provided by the St Brandon's Consort and the Brancepeth Community Choir, most notably at Easter and Christmas.

There is a congregation of between 45 and 50 people for most of these services. The make-up of this congregation broadly reflects that of the parish as a whole: retired people are a significant proportion, and there are relatively few children and young people. Nevertheless, the Sunday School runs most weeks, thanks to the dedication of its leader and a small group of volunteer helpers.

A considerable part of the congregation for these services, perhaps a third, comes from outside the parish. Some come because they are attracted by the style of worship, or the welcome they experienced on a visit. Others used to live close by and have remained involved even after moving away.

Our normal Sunday services are held within a framework marked by the occasional services that are held throughout the year, including:

- a candlelit carol service;
- a crib service;
- a Christingle service;
- a midnight Christmas service;
- Christmas morning;
- an Ash Wednesday eucharist and ashing;
- Mothering Sunday;
- a Palm Sunday procession;
- daily services in Holy Week;
- a dawn vigil on Easter Sunday;
- an Ascension Day service;
- a service of remembrance for All Souls; and
- Remembrance Sunday.





Several of these services – especially the carol service, crib service, Christingle, Christmas, Mothering Sunday, Easter, and Remembrance Sunday – draw in a wider range of people from the local community than a typical Sunday morning service, and encourage them to think of St Brandon's as their church, open for them.

For the regular congregation, Holy Week and Easter are of particular importance. The eucharists on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings in Holy Week offer the opportunity for various lay members of the congregation to offer short homilies, giving their thoughts on the events recounted in the gospel readings. After Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services, often with rich musical support, the Easter dawn vigil provides a beautiful climax – and is followed by breakfast in the castle.

Morning Prayer is held every weekday in the church at 8 a.m., a tradition established when the congregation returned to the building in 2005 following the fire of 1998.

We livestream some of our morning services on Facebook. Instructions for viewing the livestream or recent recordings can be found at <https://stbrandon.org.uk/livestreaming/>.

This whole worshipping life continues to evolve. We work within an existing pattern, but continue to develop what we do. Our hope is to continue with this process of experimentation within an ongoing tradition, combining new and old ways of praising God. In particular, we want to continue developing our use of music in our worship. After the unexpected death recently of our organist, we are currently looking for someone to fill his shoes. We also want to build on our use of organ and piano, and the occasional contributions by the St Brandon's Consort and the Brancepeth Community Choir.



## Statistics

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Electoral Roll	111	96	99	99	99	96	97

Regular services	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Adults	49	50	50	50	45	46	47	45
Children	5	5	4	4	2	4	6	3

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Baptisms	10	8	9	7	3	1	9	4	7	3
Weddings	6	7	4	4	1	0	2	1	2	1
Funerals	5	6	4	2	3	0	2	3	3	8





## Mission

### Partnership for Missional Church

In 2022 St Brandon's signed up for the 'Partnership for Missional Church' (PMC) process: a three-year journey embarked on with other churches in the diocese. Its focus is on learning to listen more attentively to others, to build more relationships and partnerships within our community, to develop new habits in expressing our faith, to notice more where God is at work, and generally to move towards being more deeply missional.

#### *The story so far*

Year 1 was about 'listening': finding out what our context is really like. We conducted interviews in and beyond the church, and held a 'timeline event' to explore the church's story. Year 2 was about 'experimenting'. This involved taking on an 'adaptive challenge' – in other words, a challenge to which we did not already know the solution. Our challenge was to do with 'connecting generously with those who are newer to our village and community'. We were invited to trust that God was leading us and that a way forward would become clear. In the event, we focussed on our relationships with other village groups: we facilitated a gathering of those groups where all could share



their post-Covid experiences; we had a presence, with other groups, at a village archives exhibition; we changed the name and layout of the newsletter, produced by the church and delivered free to every house in the village, to better reflect its nature as a service for the whole community.

#### *Where we are now*

We are now into Phase 3 of this process. Phase 3 is about 'focussing', and involves working with the PCC to embed some of the practices and insights of PMC into the ongoing life of the church. There are good suggestions in the PMC resources about how to do this. A few obstacles have arisen, though, that we did not foresee three years ago: the diocesan backing of PMC has come



to an end, so we no longer have support from a diocesan officer, and some of our core team members have moved away. The core team are, however, committed to continuing.

*What next?*

PMC is described as a 'process' rather than a 'project' because its emphasis is on shifting the focus of church life and outlook outwards. We are already seeing this shift. PMC also emphasises the importance of taking time to seek where God might be leading us, rather than being driven by 'what needs to be done now', important though that is. This is why Phase 3 is not working towards a pre-determined end, but towards incorporating ways of doing things that will keep us open and outward-facing, and – as the whole church together – looking to God's wisdom as we discern where to direct our focus each year.





## Engaging with the local community

Brancepeth is a small village, with a population of 432 recorded in the 2021 census. It is also distinctive within the local area. It is not, like so many local towns and villages, an ex-mining community. Rather, the castle (with St Brandon's church right next to it) formed the nucleus around which the village developed. Older housing built up over the centuries has been joined in more recent decades by a couple of small new estates and a scatter of individual houses. Most of the houses are owner-occupied. The village is surrounded by farmland, and the parish includes several scattered farms and cottages. The whole village lies within a conservation area, and many of the older buildings are listed.

Brancepeth's population is largely (though not exclusively) white, middle-class, and professional. Many of the residents are incomers to the region, and there are relatively few indigenous north-easterners. There is a larger than average number of retired people, and correspondingly a relatively small number of young families. This demographic is in significant contrast to the surrounding population centres.

2021 census data	
% aged 0-4	2.2
% aged 5-19	12.1
% aged 20-29	6.8
% aged 30-44	10.1
% aged 45-69	46.8
% aged 70 and over	22.0

2021 census data	
% Asian ethnicity	0.0
% Black ethnicity	1.1
% Mixed ethnicity	0.7
% White ethnicity	97.2
% Other ethnicity	0.9

According to the Church of England's official 'Index of Multiple Deprivation' data, the parish has a current ranking of 5221 out of 12239 in terms of deprivation (where 1 is the most deprived and 12239 is the least deprived). The PCC find this figure surprising, however, as our experience is that the parish is an area of relative affluence amidst the surrounding communities.





Brancepeth Castle is home to an extensive family and a number of shorthold tenants, ranging from jobseekers and retired people to university staff. It plays host to various events such as craft fairs, wedding receptions, and residential workshops throughout the year. It is also the home of the ‘Community of the Well’, a small, non-residential community under the direction of our Associate Minister, Revd Alison Hobbs, offering retreats and spiritual direction. A daily pattern of Anglican worship is offered in the castle chapel.

The Village Hall provides a focus for the active Brancepeth Community Association (BCA), which puts on various events throughout the year. The programme of events has taken a long time to recover from the Covid pandemic, and that recovery is still not complete, but several members of our congregation have been playing a role in it. It is a constitutional requirement of the BCA that a member of the church has a place on the management committee, and some of its events are held in the church.

The Golf Club forms a strong social centre for golfers and other local residents.

These are the main village amenities, apart from a café in the castle. The nearest corner shop is just over a mile away in Meadowfield. There is no school in the village: local primary schools are in Meadowfield and Langley Moor, secondary schools in Durham and Willington.

The relationship between the church and the wider village is strong but complex. At times, there has been a tendency for ‘church’ and ‘village’ to seem like separate communities – and yet there are all sorts of connections between the two. Most obviously, there are a variety of people who are thoroughly involved in both village life and the church.

Special services provide one context for the local community to engage with the church. Alongside the festivals already mentioned, other services oriented toward the community have included ‘Come and Sing’ evensongs, and services to mark major national events, such as the death of the Queen and the Coronation. Baptisms, weddings, and funerals for members of the local community also provide a connection.



We have links with the Durham Aged Mineworkers' Homes Association through the sheltered housing at Russell Close. Here, among other things, home communion is offered once a month, a service that is particularly welcomed by those who attend.

Pastoral support is also strong. A great deal of visiting, pastoral care, and praying takes place around the congregation and around the wider local community. Most of this work goes on very quietly behind the scenes, but it provides a web of relationships that weave the church into the life of the community.





## Engaging with children and young people

Sunday School runs throughout the year, with short breaks over the school holidays. At present, two children attend regularly, with numbers increasing in weeks when there are baptisms.

Messy Church meets monthly and draws in between six and fifteen adults and between ten and eighteen children. The Messy Church team also provide children's activities at the bi-annual Craft Fair held at the castle.

The Youth Club is an open group run fortnightly in the Village Hall. The number attending is small – typically four at present. They have a 'God Spot' at each meeting, and all participants are willing and able to engage with this.

There are several all-age services annually, most notably the crib service, Christingle, Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter.

We know that sustaining and developing this work is one of the key challenges that we face.

At times the Sunday School, Youth Club, and Messy Church feel close to the threshold of viability, even though they are kept going by the hard work and enthusiasm of key volunteers. It is also clear that none of these groups consistently reaches the critical mass needed to provide those who attend with a key friendship group linked to church, but that is hard in a small village.

We need to spread our net more widely within nearby local communities. We have no school in the parish, which might otherwise provide one obvious route for developing this work, but we would like to develop links with schools from the wider area, and have very recently had some interest from one of them.



*Messy Church farm visit*





We face a further significant challenge in bridging the gap between our children's and youth groups and our largely adult-focussed Sunday eucharists – though, in the past, some children became servers, which did provide one bridge across this gap.

We also recognise that, at present, St Brandon's doesn't offer much to young adults who are not already familiar with and committed to attending church, except where they are coming with their own children. (There is, however, a very active band of bellringers from the university. St Brandon's has, for many years, been the home tower to the Durham University Society of Change Ringers, and so is able to draw on the Society's services on Sunday mornings and for special events such as weddings – but the bellringers seldom get involved in other aspects of the St Brandon's life.)



## Caring for God's creation

Our Climate Action Group, established in September 2020, helped us achieve an A Rocha Bronze Award as an Eco Church in 2021. We are now well on our way towards our silver award. We already use LED lighting, display advice about optimising use of appliances in the kitchen, undertake careful setting of the heating system to reflect usage of the building, maintain the building as well as we can, use green cleaning products, have draught excluders fitted to external doors, are on a green electricity tariff, and offset all of our carbon emissions. We also make an annual donation to A Rocha.

As one of the churches in the top 20% of carbon emitters in the diocese, we were asked by the diocese to produce a Net Zero Action Plan. Our Phase 1 plan was submitted in June 2024, and Phase 2 in March 2025. We participated in the Durham Energy Institute / Church of England Decarbonisation of Heritage Buildings project in 2021-22, which provided a detailed analysis of our carbon emissions and recommendations for reaching net zero. Because of all the work we have already undertaken, our focus is now on the eventual replacement of our gas-fired heating system by 2030. Air source heat pumps are the most likely option since they would allow the continued usage of the underfloor heating system and, unlike the other options, would have minimal aesthetic impact (particularly relevant for a Grade I listed building)

Caring for God's creation has been a common theme for sermons in recent years, and a couple of years ago we ran an event encouraging people to consider their own carbon footprints.





## **Challenging poverty and pursuing justice**

We collect groceries for Durham Foodbank via a bin at the back of church. On Mothering Sunday, we collect toiletries for the Durham Women's Refuge, and in the run-up to Christmas we gather gifts for distribution by the Salvation Army in Langley Moor, and shoeboxes for distribution by Blythwood Care.

We maintain a link with Church Action on Poverty, and try to mark their Sunday each year. We also provide regular financial support for Durham Action on Single Housing, the Durham-Lesotho Link, USPG, Christian Aid, and the Children's Society – seeking, in general, to give a tithe (10%) of the church's expenditure.

Issues of social justice more broadly – such as challenging marginalisation and exclusion on the basis of race, class, gender, or sexuality – are a regular theme of Sunday morning sermons.



## **Our life together**

### **Discipleship**

Our weekly services are the primary context for our learning and growing together as disciples. Messy Church, Youth Club, and Sunday School are also contexts for such growth.

There are no regular Bible study or fellowship groups run in the parish. A few years back we surveyed the congregation about this, and found there was little appetite for long-term groups. Most years, however, we run a Lent group and we have in the past had an Advent group. Other small groups have run occasionally for a fixed period, such as the Living in Love and Faith discussion group.

In the past, we have also run a series of small group discussions on the theme of the sermon, immediately after the service.

### **Inclusion**

St Brandon's endeavours to be a welcoming and an inclusive community, and especially to be a place where people who are marginalised or excluded in wider society can feel that they fully belong.

One recent indication of this was the PCC's unanimous endorsement of the previous priest-in-charge's decision to offer Prayers of Love and Faith for same-sex couples.

Another indication has been the way in which trans and non-binary people have been welcomed, as was demonstrated when a trans woman recently became a member of PCC and our representative to Deanery Synod.

Three Ukrainians have been welcomed by our church and are regular attendees.





## Governance

There is a strong history of shared leadership at St Brandon's. We regularly have lay worship leaders and preachers, and decision-making on PCC and elsewhere is highly collaborative and collegial.

An example of shared leadership would be our involvement in the Partnership for Missional Church process, which has been a key space for discerning our way forward, and which has involved both laity and clergy at every stage and has been more lay-led than clergy-led. Another example would be our worship team, which consists of both clergy and lay people and meets three times a year to evaluate past worship and plan future worship.

A lot of work is needed to sustain and develop our life together, but when people are asked to help they surprisingly often say yes. With a very few exceptions, we have been able to sustain all our normal activities and processes during the vacancy.

One church warden commented, 'As church warden during vacancy I have been overwhelmed by the support, guidance and willingness to help out from many of the congregation. There is a wealth of experience and expertise in different areas. People appear to have taken on new responsibilities ensuring that worship, music and welcome have continued.'

The PCC are fully aware of their role as trustees, and have a real desire to do governance well. A recent arrival on the PCC commented that they were 'very impressed with admin, efficient use of time, and timekeeping; good positive atmosphere and chance for all to contribute'. Another member of the congregation recently noted that 'PCC membership turns over on a relatively regular basis which feels healthy - as someone who has served on PCC and currently has stepped away having completed my term, I'm grateful that this is possible without feeling as if I'm somehow letting others down.'

While there are certainly different perspectives, and people express a variety of views on the matters we discuss, it is a long time since there was any real conflict on the PCC. People do sometimes express their views with passion, and occasionally someone's frustration with a particular discussion will be evident - but that takes place against a background of good relationships and mutual trust.

It is more common for discussions to centre around practical matters than doctrinal issues. Having said that, the area that has, in recent years, generated the most intense discussions has been the eucharist, with debates about whether to offer the reserved sacrament for Good Friday, the appropriate frequency of Services of the Word, and how to receive safely post-Covid.



Recent priests-in-charge and lay chairs have been good at ensuring that there is space for people to express themselves, and at seeking consensus where possible – or, when it is not, ensuring that decisions are taken only after all have been heard, and often at a meeting following the one in which most discussion has taken place.

We have a Standing Committee consisting of the church wardens, the Reader, the treasurer, the lay chair of the PCC and the PCC secretary. In addition, the PCC has committees for fabric and finance, administration, and worship. Members of the PCC all play an active role in the life of the church and can be relied upon to take up new challenges when they arise.

Beyond the PCC, most of the regular congregation are actively involved in sustaining our life together, in one way or another: admin team, chalice assistants, cleaners, coffee rota, fabric and finance committee, flower guild, intercessors, Messy Church team, mowing rota, musicians, PCC, prayer team, preaching team, readers, sacristans, sidespeople, Sunday School leaders, tech team, worship team, Youth Club leaders, and more.





## Safeguarding

The Diocese of Durham is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. All post holders and volunteers are expected to share this commitment.

St Brandon's has a strong safeguarding culture, in part as a result of having had recent priests-in-charge and a long-term Parish Safeguarding Officer who have been very good at communicating both what we need to do and why we need to do it. It is not treated as a tick-box exercise (though we do tick all the boxes we are asked to) but as a necessary and vital part of our life together. Nevertheless, more could perhaps be done in relation to the understanding of safeguarding within the congregation in general, amongst those who have not taken on any role that demands safeguarding training or that would involve them in regular discussion of safeguarding.

We follow Safer Recruiting and People Management procedures in relation to all relevant roles in the church.

Safeguarding is a fixed item on every PCC agenda, and we receive full and careful reports from the Parish Safeguarding Officer. In February 2025, he led an extraordinary PCC meeting exclusively to discuss safeguarding and some of the new Church of England requirements. The tenor of that discussion, like that of other substantial discussions of safeguarding at PCC in recent years, was engaged and reflective.

There have been a few minor safeguarding incidents in the past few years, all of which have been handled appropriately, demonstrating that our policies and processes function well.

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Safeguarding information is displayed clearly on noticeboards in the church and the Village Hall, and is available from a link visible on the front page of our website.

Safeguarding is also an occasional subject for sermons. (One recent example is [available on our website](#).)

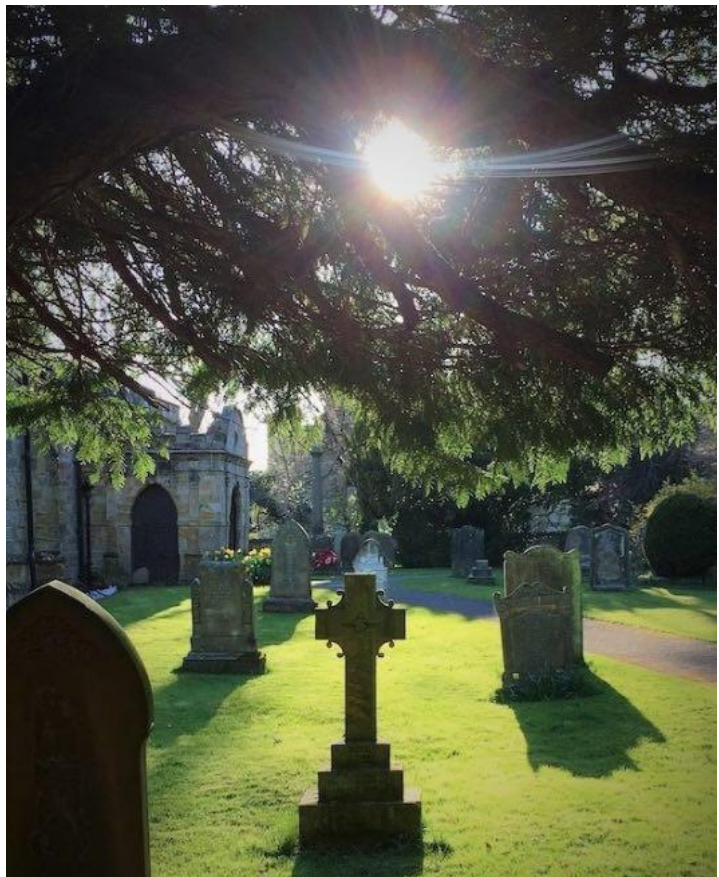
On the Diocesan Safeguarding Dashboard, Level 3, we have achieved 100% progress on mandatory requirements (as of 17th March 2025).

## Links to other churches

The Durham deanery is a complex one, without a very strong history of collaboration, in part because of the sheer diversity of churches contained within it (from the cathedral to small churches in former mining communities). We have two active Deanery Synod representatives who provide comprehensive reports to the rest of the PCC, though it is perhaps fair to say that we don't have much involvement in wider deanery affairs beyond that.

We have good communication with the diocese, not least through having the Diocesan Secretary as a church member. Recent priests-in-charge have often had diocesan roles, too, which has helped strengthen that connection. Five members of PCC attended recent diocesan training on PCCs.

We contribute each year to the local Salvation Army's Christmas appeal, and some congregation members take part in activities organised by the ecumenical Churches Together in DH7 group, but such ecumenical engagement is not a highly visible part of our life as a church. The PMC process has, however, involved meeting, talking to, and working with people from a variety of other local churches.



## Key people

The incumbent is supported by the Associate Minister, Revd Alison Hobbs, and by our Reader, Prof. Geoff Moore. The current church wardens are Mrs Carol Beeby and Prof. Mike Higton.



## The church building

The PMC process has reinforced our sense that the church should be one hub amongst others for the life of the village and the wider local community. We hope that, with this building as a base, members of the congregation will have opportunities to act as salt and light within the village population and beyond, and to connect generously with newcomers, those on the fringes of the life of the church, or those who are isolated from our village life.

We want that whole community to regard the church building as their own – a space in which they are not just welcomed but have a sense that they belong, that they are part of the life that is sustained here, and that their contribution is welcomed.

We want the church building itself – through its beauty, its spaciousness, and all that fills it – to communicate something of the presence and loving attention of God to all who come into it, whether that is for a casual visit, a village event, a concert, or a service. In fact, our building – open every day throughout daylight hours – is also a key element of our evangelism. The visitors' book testifies to how its beauty enables many people to encounter God, and there are signs around the building explaining the faith that the building reflects.

St Brandon's has an ancient history and was once renowned for its glorious 17th-century woodwork. However, a devastating fire in 1998 gutted the church, destroying almost all the contents. The aftermath of the fire witnessed an extraordinary coming together of the congregation in response. People saw the process of rebuilding as a chance to identify how they wanted their church to evolve for the future, and a decision was made to rethink the space inside the church for the new century. The result is a light, open, and versatile space that can be used for a variety of purposes. Not only are there possibilities for rearrangement to



accommodate different styles of service, but it is also easy to make the church available for use by external organisations.

St Brandon's is a popular venue for concerts, retreat days, recordings, and other events. It would nevertheless be good to see the number of events like concerts hosted in the church increase, though more people would need to be involved in sharing the considerable workload that such usage generates.

The restoration of the church allowed the installation of underfloor heating, a new sound system, a modern kitchen and toilets, and a dedicated Sunday School room. The sound system is adequate but temperamental. The heating system works well, and the church is normally warm enough in winter (though occasionally a little draughty), but the costs of heating (financial and environmental) are a concern.

### Ongoing maintenance

The costs of ongoing maintenance for this Grade I listed building are substantial, although we have so far been able to meet them from a combination of grants, specific appeals, and the congregation's generous giving.

The largest item of work recommended after our recent quinquennial inspection is the removal of a decommissioned subterranean boiler house, which seems to be causing problems with damp and associated deterioration

of nearby stonework. The PCC has been able so far to cover the cost of our architects drawing up detailed plans (recently completed), and a quantity surveyor costing those plans (ongoing). This will provide the basis for grant applications which will be necessary to pursue the work itself, because the costs will be significant.

Beyond that, there are minor matters such as some work needed on flashings, cracks in render, pointing, slipped slates, and general stonework. We are in the process of applying for small grants from the diocese to cover this work. We have not yet pursued some minor recommendations related to the bell chamber – improved access to the roof, minor joinery repairs, and so on.





## Finance

St Brandon's unrestricted funds <sup>*</sup>					
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Income	52,778	58,810	58,072	58,020	64,526
Expenditure	49,780	55,457	55,960	67,592	59,631
Surplus / (Deficit)	2,998	3,353	2,112	(9,572)	4,895

St Brandon's finances are fairly healthy, but maintaining that health is an increasing challenge. Although our 2024 figures show a small surplus overall, we expect to run a deficit in 2025. We were until last autumn on a three-year fixed-rate gas contract set before the recent inflation crisis; our new gas contract is substantially more expensive. Other costs are increasing for us, as they are for everyone. At the same time, some of the regular givers who have given most have moved away over the past few years.

Most of our congregational giving comes in through planned giving via Standing Order or the Parish Giving scheme (£33,756 in 2024); very little now comes in through loose plate collections (£3,445 in 2024).

We ran a stewardship campaign in autumn 2023, which led to an increase in regular giving of approximately 10%, and to a couple of large one-off donations. It is not clear, though, that it changed attitudes, nor that it particularly needed to: St Brandon's was already a generous community, with a high proportion of the regular congregation engaged in planned giving. A substantial majority of the increase came from people who were already faithful and generous givers.

Our basic communication about giving is solid: we run campaigns like the one just mentioned every few years, we thank those who give, we make it easy to give, we have occasional sermons on the subject, and all of this helps to keep our regular givers committed and encourages their generosity. That said, we do perhaps shy away from more intentional work in this area, raising targeted funds for the church itself in a way that we are more comfortable doing when raising funds for others such as Christian Aid and the Children's Society. There is also more that we could do to actively discuss giving with new members of the congregation.

The amount of Parish Share that we offer more than covers the cost of our ministry (it is closer to twice that cost), and the attitude towards giving towards diocesan costs has almost always been positive – recognising that, as a relatively affluent parish in a deprived diocese, we should try to

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<sup>\*</sup> We have focussed here on unrestricted funds to filter out a recent grant-funded stonework project, which generated extraordinary income and expenditure.

contribute as much as we can to support the work of the church elsewhere in the diocese where there is more financial need. For the present year, we have been able to pledge 96.5% of the Parish Share total proposed by the diocese, and we would like in future to return to pledging 100%. Decisions about Parish Share are determined by our reserves policy. When, each autumn, the PCC examines the budget for the following year, we look at the predicted outturn for the year and work out what level of Parish Share is likely to leave us within our reserves targets for that year. In recent years this process has been entirely without controversy.

St Brandon's pays reasonable clergy expenses, and we expect our clergy to take proper holidays and days off. We fully support them in CME, reading, and personal development.





## Incumbent's housing

The rectory is a modern bungalow a few hundred yards from the church and easily accessible from anywhere in the village. It consists of four bedrooms, study, sitting room (well sized for meetings), dining room, kitchen, bathroom, and toilet. There is gas central heating. A large and well-maintained garden is supplemented by extensive outbuildings.



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