



THE DIOCESE OF
DURHAM

Welcome!

The parish profile for St John's Birtley
and St Andrew's Lamesley



Our Diocesan Vision - An introduction from Bishop Sarah

This is an exciting time to be exploring joining the Diocesan family in Durham Diocese. We are on the cusp of a fresh chapter in our mission and ministry together. We are currently discerning with the National Church who will be the next Bishop of Durham, called to lead as we seek to make real our vision for the transformation we so desire across our Diocese. We are deeply encouraged by the award this year of significant national funding, demonstrating real confidence in our vision.

Our strategy for transformation and missional growth ('Called to Fruitfulness') is an opportunity and invitation for each of our parishes to step out in faith together, responding practically to our priorities to **Challenge Poverty, Energise Growth, Care for God's Creation** and **Engage with Children, Youth and Young Adults**. Making this a reality it will look different in every community. In some places it will come about in collaboration with others. Nobody is expected to do everything immediately or alone, but we are all invited and expected to find ways to respond relevantly.

In Birtley and Lamesley this feels particularly relevant. We sense the importance of **Energising Growth** – in discipleship and in the number of people served by and engaging in the life of our churches. We also sense the importance of **Challenging Poverty, Engaging with Children and Young People** and **Caring for God's Creation** in an area with lots of families, with some significant pockets of poverty, and with deeply rooted communities that still look to, and are open to, the local church.

In praying for a new Priest we are looking for someone excited by and wanting to be part of this vision and new future. Together we pray hopefully

Loving God, guiding the people of Durham Diocese faithfully through the years:

We thank you for saints who have marked our path,

young and old, known and unknown, from all places and in all walks of life.

Help us to find your way in our generation:

transformed by your truth, sharing your life, blessing our communities.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen

We look forward to meeting together and sharing in this with you.

In Christ,

+Sarah

Bishop of Jarrow

Acting Bishop of Durham





THE DIOCESE OF
DURHAM

A message from the Archdeacon of Sunderland

Thank you for taking the time to look and pray about at this exciting new post in the Diocese of Durham.

This is an exciting time for the parishes who are coming together for the first time. During their vacancies, the PCCs and congregations have formed good relationships and are eager to work together with their new priest for the growth of the Kingdom of God in the area.

The parishes have worked hard together on this profile and have provided information about themselves separately to give a good overview but wish the document to be seen as a whole, recognising their desire to work together. If you would like to see the complete VAP report, please contact me.

There is still a decision to be made as to whether they remain in separate deaneries or go into either Gateshead or Chester-le-Street deanery, however they wish to do that in consultation with their new priest. They are also making a decision at a joint PCC about service times going forward and this will be settled before a new appointment.

This is an exciting role of vision forming, collaborative working and mission opportunities and if you wish to have a conversation about it then please do not hesitate to contact either myself or one of the Area Deans.

Please be assured of my prayers for all of those who are considering this post.

With every blessing

Archdeacon Bob Cooper

Deanery

Currently Birtley parish in the Deanery of Chester-le-Street and Houghton, with representation on the Deanery Synod and the Diocesan Synod and Lamesley parish is in the Deanery of Gateshead, with representation on the Deanery Synod. The PCCs are exploring becoming part of one deanery in the future.

Vicarage

A new Vicarage has recently been purchased within easy reach of both churches.

The role of Parish Priest for St John's, Birtley and St Andrew's, Lamesley

We are looking forward to welcoming and supporting a new priest in charge who will work with the parishes of St Andrew's, Lamesley and St John's, Birtley, aiming to fulfil the Diocesan priorities of **Energising Growth, Caring for God's Creation, Engaging with Children, Youth, Young Adults and Challenging Poverty** .

We look forward to meeting you and working together to make the love of Christ known to everyone in our parishes.

Introduction

We are thankful that we have achieved so much at St Andrews during the vacancy, pastorally, socially, how we are progressing with Eco Church and projects established through the Partnership for Missional Church (PMC).

St John's is a church with a long-standing commitment to serve a growing parish and seeks a priest who can help in refreshing mission and growing the church.

Both churches have dedicated PCCs with a good skill set who, along with our congregations remain committed to being a Christian witness in our parishes, and are open to change to enable our churches to grow and flourish. We are now seeking strategic leadership to take us forward and growing the church in Birtley and Lamesley.

Our Priest in Charge will be:

A committed priest, a shepherd, with experience of church growth, change and mission, enabling and supporting the ministry of all people, young and old.

A prayerful priest who will help our churches identify and prioritise their core mission and the opportunities there are to help us develop a strategic approach to mission.

A unifying priest who will work alongside our PCCs and congregations, who is a good communicator with people of all backgrounds, both within our churches and the wider community.

A priest who recognises our traditions of worship and liturgical practice, whilst exploring with the PCCs and congregations, the introduction of new forms of worship, to enable us to engage with the wider community, and to convey the relevance of Christ in their lives.

A priest who will help us to develop our ministry with Children and Young People, so that they may learn of the love of Christ in their lives, and together we can all grow in discipleship and faith.

A person who is generous of spirit, sociable and has a sense of humour.

Most importantly a priest who with us will discern God's vision for what He calls us to be and do.



THE DIOCESE OF
DURHAM

*The Parish of St. John the Evangelist, Birtley
Parish Profile 2024*



Welcome to the Parish of St John's Birtley

St John's is a church with a long-standing commitment to serve a growing parish and seeks a priest who can help in refreshing mission and growing the church.

We anticipate exciting times ahead as we move towards sharing a full-time priest with St. Andrews, Lamesley, and step forward with faith in the future of St John's in Birtley.

We are excited to welcome a priest with energy and enthusiasm, who can nurture and encourage our church in mission, who will help us to reestablish previously strong links with local schools and help us to both renew and strengthen our commitment to the young, to families, and the whole parish.

We are looking and praying for a missional priest who will help us to build on our existing links and develop our work in this community in social action, community engagement, prayer and evangelism.

We are excited to meet you and look forward to working together to make the love of Christ known to everyone in our parish.



Our church and our missional vision

St John's church has a loyal, enthusiastic and dedicated team of volunteers, but like many parishes the congregation has a large proportion of older members of the community, and is seeking leadership to widen its mission, conveying the message of the Gospel to all in the community, particularly the many young people and families in the parish, building on the excellent relationships with local schools established by the former incumbent.

Mission & Social Action

We have strong ecumenical ministry in partnership with other denominations in the town, and involvement via the Birtley Churches Together group on issues such as tackling poverty, supporting foodbanks and charitable giving.

We enjoy annual joint worship events such as Advent, Pentecost and Remembrance Day.

The Missions and Charities group provides targeted giving endorsed by PCC, which is reviewed every 3 years. We also support The Gateshead Foodbank with a collection of non-perishable food items. We are actively involved with Christian Aid Week, and in recent years this has involved a collection over two days at the local Morrison's Supermarket, with volunteers from all Birtley Churches, which gives an opportunity for witness in the community. Our Christingle service supports The Children's Society.



Children, Youth and Schools

Engaging with Children, Youth and Young Adults has been identified by the Diocese as being a key missional priority. Locally, there are a high number of young people, families and schools, but they are not currently strongly represented in our church life. Supporting local families has always been important to us as a church but feels especially important at this time and for the future of the church. As a church we are eager to renew our engagement with and outreach to children, youth & families.

Over many years local schools came to St John's church for school services and educational visits. We wholeheartedly welcome this engagement. We have a positive and longstanding relationship with local schools, particularly Ravensworth Terrace and Portobello Primary schools and Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy, giving us an important point of connection to local families. This is something we seek to reestablish with the support of a Parish Priest.

We have previously explored setting up a **messy church** style experience for young children and their families and we would welcome further exploration of this style of event in future.

St John's has adopted the practice of admitting children to Communion before Confirmation.

Ministry

St John's has been a training parish and enjoyed taking Ordinands from Cranmer Hall, and has supported Reader Ministry for many years. We are fortunate to currently have one Lay Reader. Funeral ministry is an integral part of St John's and Birtley and our Lay Reader covers most of these. The commitment to bereaved families is excellent, and the feedback attests to the fact that those families very much appreciate the services and the support they receive.

At present, St John's has the benefit of a supportive Honorary Assistant Priest (retired). Lay ministry is also a significant asset to St Johns, and this has included licencing for the administration of communion in church, providing home communion and pastoral support, including to the Residential Care Homes in the parish, and assisting with local hospital Chaplaincy.

Other missional activities we see as a priority include the building up of a children's ministry, which has been absent over recent years, and especially since the pandemic and current vacancy.

The PCC and congregation seek to work with a priest who can help us grow and develop our mission and ministry within Birtley Parish.



St. John's Church set up for a Baptism Service

Worship in St. John's

Our **normal pattern of services:**

Sunday 10 am – Sung Eucharist (usually led by an able Music/Worship Group)

Thursday 10 am – Eucharist

Both services are followed by refreshments and the opportunity for fellowship.

Baptisms are normally arranged to follow Sunday Morning Eucharist at 12.30pm as required. This is supported by a dedicated Baptism Team, members of the congregation who guide and welcome families.

In addition to our weekly rhythm of worship, we celebrate special seasonal services such as Christingle and Christmas services, Holy Week and Easter.



Christingle Service Christmas Eve 2023

Music has always been central to worship in St John's. Historically, this was mixed, with both traditional Choir and Organ, and a contemporary Music Group. More recently the Music Group Leader and a small band (Piano/Guitar/Flute) have become responsible for providing the music at the main Sunday service, and at other services as required.

The style is contemporary in the main, but draws on the traditional when appropriate, and includes responsorial music to accompany the Eucharistic settings. They often incorporate the music of Taizé and from around the world. Members of the congregation are encouraged to participate, and we would be delighted to attract a priest with an appreciation of music who supports the ongoing ministry of music in St. John's.

Our Buildings – Church and Church Hall

Building of St John's started in 1848 and it opened for worship in December that year. It is a traditional building of the time in a Norman style and is a Grade II listed building. Changes have been made from the start, with a vestry and an organ added over 1849 and it was finally consecrated by the Lord Bishop of Durham on August 9th 1849. Prior to that, Birtley and its surrounding communities had been part of the Parish of Chester-le-Street but had grown and developed to a size where a separate parish became desirable. The congregation are celebrating 175 years of the building and recognise and value its history and its ongoing ministry within the parish and growing community, particularly with families coming for Baptism, weddings and funeral ministry.

Throughout its history, the congregation with the leadership of its various incumbents, has sought to make the church building welcoming and accessible in an ever-changing world. Church is now fully accessible (with toilet facilities in the church hall nearby, accessed via a recently resurfaced path within the church grounds), and the church has a hearing loop system installed.



There have been various alterations across the years, and over the 1990's, a targeted programme was developed *Toward 2000* and the building was re-roofed and rewired with other repairs and alterations. These included a re-ordering of the West end and tower - mainly to make the west end vestries and tower area more usable. An office was created in the clergy vestry and the central tower area made usable as a small meeting place.

The nave and altar crossing provide an ideal open space with good acoustics, and which has been used for performances, including visiting choirs and orchestras.

The stained glass in St John's has been recently restored, some of which is by renowned glass artists.

Our Churchwardens and those who are able in the congregation maintain the fabric of the building. At the present time, the church building needs some significant repairs which places pressure on finances. The quinquennial report was carried out in the summer of 2023. Matters raised are being dealt with by the Churchwardens, with a priority to eradicate water ingress between the Sacristy and the Organ chamber. At this time, remedial action seems to have been successful, but further repairs and maintenance will be required as a matter of priority.



The Church Hall

The Church Hall is a valuable asset of our church. There is good accessibility from the small car parking area within the grounds. Recent renovations make it now fully accessible with regard to entrances and toilet facilities. The Church Hall provides us with a social space for both church use and for rental to outside organisations. This currently includes an After-school club daily during term time, and groups as diverse as adult dance lessons, fitness sessions and a music society.

The hall is licensed for alcohol and entertainment and has played a significant part in fundraising and the social life of St. John's and the wider community. Over the years we have enjoyed Fun Days, BBQs and other events. This is something we would love to see even more of in the future.

Recently the hall was hired to accommodate a Warm Space, run by Birtley BAME group with support from the Lottery fund and Gateshead Council. We would welcome more collaboration with such groups and others such as Age UK who are exploring activities for older people, locally.



Finances

Finances are overseen by the Treasurer and year end statements are externally examined annually. Our income has reduced over recent years with our biggest expenditure on gas, electricity and insurance. The parish pledge for the Parish Share is £18,000, which has been met for 2023 and monthly payments are on track for 2024. We have a *Building Fund* which supports maintenance. It is likely that fundraising will be necessary for bigger projects. A digital card reader for giving has recently been introduced, and we hope this will help with collections at services such as Baptisms, in future.

The Church Hall is self-sufficient with private hire and occasional income from the licensed bar.



The Community in more detail

Birtley is a moderate sized town with a population of around 12594. It has an IMD ranking of 1431 out of 12382 in terms of deprivation. Therefore, the parish is among the most deprived in the country. Situated in the Borough of Gateshead, on Tyneside, England, Birtley lies between the local cities of Newcastle (5 miles north), Sunderland (9 miles east) and Durham (10 miles south) and nestles between the A1/A1(M) to the east and the main east coast railway line to the west of the town. The Church is fairly centrally located on Birtley Lane, a road that runs parallel to the main street but about 100 yards above it in the town centre.

Although Birtley was originally in Co Durham until 1974, when it transferred to Gateshead in the new Metropolitan Borough of Tyne and Wear, it kept the postal address of Co Durham, so may be listed as 'Co Durham' or 'Tyne and Wear' or 'Gateshead' (or any combination of the three). *(Not to be confused with the small village called Birtley in Northumberland about 20 miles northwest of us, near Hexham.)*

Probably our best-known landmark is Antony Gormley's famous 'Angel of the North' sculpture. 'The Angel' overlooks the town from the north and can be seen from much of the town.

There is four Christian Churches in Birtley: St John's (Anglican), St Joseph's (Roman Catholic), the Methodist Church and a Community Church. There is a large cemetery at the north of the town, with attached Chapel and Crematorium serving the surrounding district.

Local amenities include a 9-hole golf course, a sports centre, library and medical centre, 4 primary schools and a large Comprehensive school. There is a large swimming pool which is currently closed due to local authority cutbacks, but a local initiative is planning to reopen the pool as *Birtley Community Aquatics Centre* in the near future.

There is a small but busy shopping area running through Birtley's main street. This includes a fair-sized supermarket, general retail and services, plus a variety of restaurants and take-away shops. There are also a few pubs and clubs in the town. Birtley is also on a busy bus route to the north and south.

Birtley is well located for access to retail, leisure, education and cultural attractions and amenities, including:

- Beamish Open Air Museum
- Team Valley Trading Estate
- Gateshead Metro Shopping Centre
- Gateshead & Newcastle Quay side (notably The Glasshouse, The Baltic Arts Centre and Millennium Bridge)
- Newcastle City Centre
- Durham City

and of course....

- 'The Angel of the North'.

Housing – there is a mix of dwellings of varying ages and styles. Over recent years, there has been a lot of expansion of housing development, attracting families and young people. There is a very good road network, with easy access to the A1, the A1(M) Motorway and the A19.



Useful contacts - Birtley

The Parish, the post and the Diocese

Enquiries about this post can be directed to the
Archdeacon of Sunderland, The Ven. Bob Cooper at
Archdeacon.of.Sunderland@durham.anglican.org

Information about our **Diocese** is available at <https://durhamdiocese.org/>

Details about **St John's church** is available online at <http://www.birtley-stjohns.org.uk/>

Our primary schools

Our area is well served by a number of local primary schools including

Barley Mow Primary School <https://barleymowprimary.org/>

Portobello Primary School <https://portobelloprimary.eschools.co.uk/website>

Ravensworth Terrace Primary School <https://www.ravensworthterrace.com/>

Birtley East Primary School <https://birtleyeastprimary.org/>

Our local Secondary School

Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy <https://lordlawson.academy/>



Our contact details are:

St John the Evangelist
Birtley

Birtley Lane
Birtley
Co Durham
DH3 2PJ



Welcome to the Parish of St Andrew's Lamesley



Our church and our missional vision

Our Mission Statement

- 1. To worship God in a way that our services are inspiring and helpful.**
- 2. To witness to the power of our faith in Christ in our daily life, at home, at work, and in the community, and by our willingness to learn and share.**
- 3. To work with love and care to maintain and develop our parish church and its grounds in the beauty of holiness as the House of God.**

Context

Part of Gateshead Deanery, of which we are active members, St Andrew's Church is situated in a rural setting 14 miles north of our great cathedral, home to the shrines of the northern saints, Cuthbert, and Bede.



The parish extends into urban areas with a mix of private and social housing, light industry, and part of an industrial estate on which there is a retail park situated in the parish. Opposite the church is Lamesley Pastures, a designated nature reserve of natural habitat for wildlife.

The church is situated less than half a mile from the A1 enabling easy access north and south.

The Ravensworth Arms is all that remains of the old village of Lamesley, once known as Clubdon and stands on the site of what was once Clubdon Hall, whose last Baron was Henry Augustus Clavering - a direct descendant from one of the custodians of the Magna Carta. It is also said to be the place where Lewis Carroll wrote some of his 'Alice' adventures.

A little way north west of the village stands Ravensworth Castle, which is now in ruins, built during the twelfth century within the Ravensworth Estate.

The famous Angel of the North sculpture by Antony Gormley is in the parish, and stands on the site of the former Ravensworth Ann Pit. In 1757 a mining disaster killed sixteen men who are buried in the churchyard.



In the parish we have one secondary and two primary schools, a resource centre for young adults with special needs and five care homes.

The Parish has a population of 6,459 at the 2021 census. It has an IMD ranking of 2710 out of 12,382 in terms of deprivation, meaning the parish is relatively deprived compared with other parishes in the country.

Our Buildings

We are proud of the rich history of our church that spans several centuries. Worshipers and visitors appreciate the sacred space it offers. It has medieval origins and can be traced back at least as far as the 13th century.

The current church was built in [1759](#) under the patronage and funding of the first Baron Ravensworth. It was extended and modified in the 19th century. The Priests' Name Board on the left of the Nave, shows the names of all the known priests who have ministered here back to the year 1409, several of whom were noteworthy.



We are blessed to have a Harrison and Harrison organ. Our worship is enhanced by our excellent and committed organist. We appreciate the extra dimension this brings to special services. At times he introduces other instruments which he also plays at our social events.



The church is a Grade 2 Listed building on the National Heritage List for England. We see our church as a symbol of the continuity of God's love through the centuries. It is in very good repair with no major external works or internal works outstanding. All essential work required from the Quinquennial Inspection in 2021 is complete.

Through our commitment to being a net zero carbon church, steered by our ECO Church group, we were delighted to gain the ECO church bronze award in 2023, and are already well on the way to gaining the silver award.



Our warm and comfortable church hall, a former school, is also in a good state of repair with two halls, a well-equipped kitchen and storage rooms. External organisations and individuals hire the hall which provides a steady income. We recognise the God given opportunity we have of engaging more with those using our hall, especially with groups like ART venturers, who provide creative play sessions for toddlers and young children, and Lamesley Childcare who run fun filled childcare during school holidays to help parents balance work and family commitments.

There is a gated carpark behind the church hall. The large carpark in front of the church is maintained by Gateshead Council.



The Church Hall

Our very active and successful Social Group continues in their ministry to provide community events and support church service gatherings in the hall. These activities provide many aspects such as entertainment, shared experiences, company, maintain our profile as a welcoming church, celebrate special events and raise funds.

These events are attended by church members, friends of the church, people from other churches and the wider community. Over the past two years we are delighted that our local councillor and some of her staff have joined us at these events. A testament to us of the impact we have on others by putting our faith into action.



Our Services and People

With an Electoral Roll of 30, we are currently a weekly worshipping community over two sites on a Sunday and midweek service at S Andrew's. The midweek service focuses on bible teaching. We look forward to once again worshipping weekly each Sunday here at St Andrew's.

Average Sunday Attendance is 27 with a mainly ageing congregation although younger people have started worshipping with us. Services are led by a committed retired priest, who until his retirement served as Associate Priest here at the United Benefice of St Andrew and St Ninian. He is assisted by a retired priest, a member of the congregation. The congregation is supportive and participate in reading lessons, leading intercessions, assisting at Holy Communion, and every church member who is able, is involved in the life and ministry of the church.

We enjoy meeting parents and children preparing for baptism when they attend worship for a Thanksgiving service. This puts them at ease of being in church and new relationships are formed.

Genuinely caring for one another is the bedrock of who we are as a church. We also have a Pastoral Group which offers care to those who are unwell or just need a friend, and those unable to attend church remain part of our prayerful concern. One person recovering from surgery recently described the support she received as being held in a cushion of love.

We recognise ordained ministry can be demanding and we will support our priest in charge in every way we can.

Ecumenical

There is one other centre of Christian worship in the parish, the United Reform Church in Low Fell, shared by Hope Evangelical Church.

Our friends from Mar Thoma Indian Church continue to use our church and church hall on the 2nd Saturday of each month. Orthodox in its origin, since 1974 it has been in full communion with the Anglican Communion. Since starting to worship here at St Andrew's it has continued to grow in numbers and its people now regard St Andrew's as their home church. We look forwarding to occasional joint services of worship in the future.

Within Gateshead there is a strong church leaders group that crosses ecumenical boundaries.



Charities and Mission

Although we have a mission statement, we now use the strap line, **Glorifying God's Creation**. This was developed during the church undertaking Partnership for Missional Church. PMC was completed in 2023 and St Andrew's was noted as one of the **outstanding** churches who participated in the PMC process.

Our presence in the community continues to develop with members of the community joining the dedicated team of litter pickers. Residents often comment how much this benefits the area. As a result of this a good relationship has been established with our local councillor. We have been awarded the **Angel Award** for our work in caring for the environment from Gateshead Council.



Links with one of the local primary schools was further developed with volunteers attending weekly to listen to children reading, and children attend church for special services. The relationship with the school continues to grow and volunteers have become a useful resource to the school, something we hope to build on in the future when the Methodist Church nearby closes in August.

The church has a large graveyard including the tomb of Robert Moscrop from 1621, which itself is Grade 2 Listed. There are also Commonwealth war graves and a cholera grave. It is now a closed churchyard, maintained by Gateshead Council.

We have a committed group of volunteers from the church and community to not only care for it, but to make it a place of peace and calm. Our volunteers work to make our graveyard environmentally friendly to wildlife as part of our commitment to being an ECO church, and as an extension of the nature reserve. This we do in partnership with Gateshead Council.

Year 6 children from our primary school seeded our wild flower patch, and children from Lamesley Childcare built an amazing bug hotel, all having a fabulous time.



Costain Group PLC who help to improve people's lives by creating connected, sustainable infrastructure that enables people and the planet thrive, have not only given funding for gardening equipment, but also provide up to 8 staff per session to work alongside church and community volunteers.



During these challenging times we continue to support the work of Gateshead Foodbank with donations of food, finances, and volunteers giving their time. We also support the Children's Society.

We take Holy Communion into some of the care homes in the parish. Young adults with special needs and their carers from Marquisway Resource Centre, situated on the Team Valley Trading Estate, enjoy lively services of worship at our church for special occasions, supported by members of the congregation.

A bi-monthly newsletter reaches more than 100 people, church members, baptism families, and people in the community. We have a church Facebook page which is well used. Information is uploaded in a timely manner with information about services and events.

There are new housing developments in our parish which we see as an opportunity for mission and growth, recognising the need to review our patterns and style of worship to achieve this. We need to continue to reach out and meet people wherever they are, both young and old and will work with our priest in charge and support him or her in this important ministry.

Finances

The Parish share Guided Pledge for 2023 was £28,150 and the actual parish pledge was £18,815. For 2024 Guided Pledge requested is £21,470, the parish has pledged £19,000. Over a three-year period, there has been a differential of 16% re actual pledge versus guided pledge.

Capital expenditure does not cause any risk to our financial stability which is aided by legacy giving. Legacies were received of £20,000 in 2017 and 2021, £1,000 in 2019 and one of £6,000 in 2022. In this current year we are expecting two legacies of £2,000 given in perpetuity and a legacy from a former parishioner is yet to be received.

Most of the regular congregation's giving is made by standing order. We are hoping that when we return to weekly Sunday worship and people find it easier to join us our income will increase.

We have been able to maintain our buildings to a good standard and there is no outstanding work which has not been budgeted for. Hall rental for 2023 was £5,669 providing income for its maintenance and upkeep.



Useful contacts - Lamesley

The Parish, the post and the Diocese

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Archdeacon of Sunderland,
The Ven. Bob Cooper at
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Information about our **Diocese** is available at <https://durhamdiocese.org/>

Information about our parish can be found here <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/13670/>



Our contact details are:

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