



ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH  
NEWBOTTLE

**NEWS**  
*from the pews*

**Spring**

**Edition 2026**

*You are the light of the world.  
A city on a hill cannot be hidden  
Matthew 5 v14*

# Parish of St. Matthew's Newbottle Diocese of Durham

## Church Services

### Sunday Services

9.45 am Family Worship-  
Holy Communion

### Wednesday

10.00 am Holy Communion

### Church Open

Tuesday 10.00-11am

Wednesday 10:30- 11:30am

### Church Hall

Church Hall Bookings by Email:  
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Susan Dick  
Vera Marshall,  
Charles Martin (Designer)

## Baptisms

18th Jan Grace Elizabeth Wilkinson

1st Feb Joey Bryan Middleton

## Funerals

## Burial of Ashes



# Vicar's Voice

As you read this, you may be tucking into a delicious chocolate Easter egg, or perhaps you have one waiting in the cupboard with your name on it. Even as an adult (who can, within reason, buy as much chocolate as I want), I still get a bit of a thrill when I open an Easter egg and see the sheer amount of chocolate inside. But today I don't want to write about eating chocolate, but making it. One of the most famous chocolate companies in years gone by was Frys. Started by Joseph Fry in 1756, he sold chocolate as a health product at first (it was, he thought, a nutritious alternative to alcohol!), but it was Joseph's son (also called Joseph) who really pressed ahead with the business. By 1824, Fry's used forty per cent of all the cocoa imported into Britain and in 1847 they pioneered a new innovation: the chocolate bar. It was a world first.

As you may know, the Frys were quakers and it made a difference to their company. Each day, work in the factory began with a hymn and a period of silence. Workers were paid fair wages. Other quaker businesses, like Cadburys and Rowntree, were ran in the same way. They saw their businesses as ways that they could love their neighbours.

But the Fry family are famous for another reason. Elizabeth Fry was a distant relative of Joseph. One day she was invited to go into Newgate prison. She was appalled by what she found. Women imprisoned for as little as stealing a loaf of bread had to bring their children with them. In their cells they had to cook, wash and sleep, although there were no beds. Dirty straw had to suffice. The next day Elizabeth Fry returned with food. The day after with fresh straw. She devoted the rest of her life to campaigning for better conditions in prisons.

I love the examples that the Fry family give us of loving our neighbour. They remind us that there are many ways to do it. Visiting those in prison: yes. Campaigning for better conditions in prison: absolutely. But also, running a fair and honest business; that's loving your neighbour too. So is buying Fairtrade chocolate. And sharing your Easter egg with a friend? Yes, that as well. We can follow Jesus' command to love our neighbour in so many different ways. So, as you crack another shard of chocolate off the egg, why not give a few moments reflection to how you, today, in your life, might love your neighbour?

# *Christenings at St. Matthew's*



Grace Elizabeth Wilkinson 18<sup>th</sup> January



Joey Bryan Middleton 1<sup>st</sup> February

# *Welcome To Our New Bishop of Durham*

On the 20th of February Downing Street announced that His Majesty the King had approved the appointment of the Venerable Rick Simpson, currently Archdeacon of Auckland, as the next Bishop of Durham.

We at St. Matthew's had met Rick when he came to Newbottle to the licensing service for Rev. Tim as our new priest in charge. He gave a very good sermon and seemed to be very down to earth.

Reacting to his appointment, Archdeacon Rick said: "I am humbled and delighted to have been called to be the Bishop of this diocese, which I love. My deepest hope is to be able to walk alongside and encourage our local Christian communities as they seek to both show God's love in action and help people to come to life-changing faith in Christ – and through this see our churches grow. It is also an honour to be tasked with representing the needs and voices of people in this region in the national church and the House of Lords."

Bishop Sarah Clark said: "I rejoice in the Venerable Rick Simpson's nomination as the next Bishop of Durham. The voice he will bring to the



wider church and national roles will be shaped by his long experience of the challenges and joys of life and faith in this land of Cuthbert, Bede and Hild."

Rick was educated at Oxford university and has served in the Diocese of Durham since 2006 when he came to be Priest in

Charge of St Brandon's, Brancepeth, helping the church to thrive and develop its mission and was also the Initial Ministerial Education Officer for both Newcastle and Durham, supporting curates and training incumbents. He became Archdeacon of Auckland in February 2018. He was a member of the Wilkinson-Jay Response Group, advising on the development of Church of England safeguarding. He served previously in the Diocese of Newcastle where, as Vicar of Holy Trinity Jesmond, he saw the church grow strongly in number and discipleship over ten years. Rick enjoys the outdoors, especially wildlife photography, playing guitar, sport, films and novels. He is married to Rachel, and they have ten godchildren and one cat.

The installation of Rick as Bishop of Durham will take place at Durham Cathedral in the summer.



Christmas at St Matthew's was, as always, warm, welcoming and joyous. It was lovely to see our friends past and present and new faces, to worship and thank God for the greatest gift ever.

There were about 90 of us at the Carols Around the Tree evening; all very informal. 195 joined us for our annual Carols by Candlelight service, the Sunday before Christmas. There were also 50 at our Christingle service and 38 at the Christmas day service. All these services were greatly enjoyed by those present and it was good to see old friends.

Collections from these services and donations from our weekly coffee after Sunday worship were given to the following charities:- £200 to the Salvation Army, £200 to Shelter, £200 to the Children's Society and £100 to Crisis Relief.

## ABOUT THE CHARITIES

**The Salvation Army** provides practical help for people in need, fighting poverty, addiction, and homelessness through services like shelters, food assistance, disaster relief, and support for families, older people, and victims of modern slavery.

**Shelter** helps people stay in their homes and fights for everyone's right to a safe, secure home.

**The Children's Society** fights for hope by deeply understanding the needs of young people and by supporting them through their most serious life challenges.

**Crisis at Christmas** is a major UK charity initiative by [Crisis](#), a homelessness charity, providing essential support, warmth, food, healthcare, and companionship to people experiencing homelessness during the festive season through day centres, hotels, and year-round services, connecting them with long-term help to leave homelessness behind for good.

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**Thank you to all those who joined us at Christmas and who donated to these very worthwhile charities.**

# Thank You Thank You Thank You

Of course, none of these services and events happen without a lot of hard work, team work and love. A huge thanks to all those involved in the services, to Tim for his input, leadership, encouragement and motivation; to George Peebles for giving his time so willingly to play the organ for us at all our major services and for all of the amazing elves (you know who you are), for decorating the church so beautifully and flower arranging, for providing the refreshments and for the huge input needed for the church fayre.

And thank you to all those who joined us over the Christmas period, it was great to have your company.

However, church is not just about Christmas. Our services go on all year and anyone is very welcome to join us any Sunday or Wednesday as well as at special services in Lent and at Easter.

And.... The Christmas elves are actually with us all year, cleaning, tidying, decorating, flower arranging, coffee making, baking and so on. So, thank you elves for all your hard work throughout the year.





# THE CHRISTMAS FAYRE

Our annual church Christmas fayre went off without a hitch with several stalls, raffles, Santa and refreshments in the Jubilee Room. It's always good fun to be together and to see all the usual faces from the village.

With everyone's help and support, we made £1,351 for church funds. These funds support the work of the church in terms of Parish Share to the Diocese, heating, electricity, insurance and repair bills.

## *Lighting of the Village Christmas Tree*

The annual lighting of the Newbottle Village Christmas Tree took place on 5th December, marking the start of the festive season for our community. Despite the winter chill, villagers of all ages gathered on the green, wrapped up in coats and scarves, to share in the excitement and companionship that this much-loved tradition brings each year.

Families, friends, and neighbours mingled, catching up and enjoying the warm atmosphere. Children waited eagerly for the countdown,

their anticipation building as the crowd came together. The glowing lights brought a touch of magic to the evening and a sense of unity to everyone present.

Following the lighting ceremony, people made their way to the church hall where refreshments were served.

The event once again proved to be a wonderful way to bring the community together and celebrate the spirit of Christmas in Newbottle.

## **Newbottle school Christmas service.**

Unfortunately, the school Christmas service had to be transferred to the school, because of bad weather. Rev Tim took the service and spoke to the children about the Christmas story and the children sang carols and Christmas songs. A thoroughly joyous occasion and a good start to the Christmas celebrations.

# INFRASTRUCTURE Mike Eames

Looking back on 2025, we were able to repair or improve much of the church and the hall infrastructure, which will be great benefit to the future of St Matthews!

Roof repair was an ongoing process due to a combination of aging roof tiles and severe wind storms. There was a focus on electrical safety by testing and upgrading the installed electrics of the church, including a complete replacement of all electrical wiring and circuit breakers in the Boiler Room, bringing it into the 21st century!

Wi-Fi was introduced into the church, with the addition of the online payment system, and the hall Wi-Fi was upgraded with new equipment.

Thanks to the excellent services of our Quinquennial Inspector Ms. Becky Smith, and armed with the detailed Inspection Report produced by her, we have had time to study the results, and discuss the way forward at a number of PCC meetings.

2026 is the year where we will start the process of the major renovation required on the church roof! This major project is for the full Northern side of the main roof area, as the Southern area was replaced a number of years ago.

We have had discussions with Becky Smith on the way forward, and with Martin Howard the Buildings for Mission Secretary, of the Diocese of Durham, on what assistance the Diocese can offer.

This Roof Replacement project will be a lengthy process, as there is much to do within the process, including obtaining Diocesan permission and looking for a grant or grants to pay for the project, so should take up most, if not all of 2026. A big thank you to all who have contributed to the Roof Fund!

Meanwhile, we will continue with the roof upkeep as the year progresses. To this end we have been meeting with potential contractors suitable for the ongoing maintenance work required in ensuring that the church remains relatively watertight.

In addition, we will be starting with our lime mortar pointing as soon as the weather warms up a little. There will also be a number of smaller projects taking place during the year, so the maintenance team should be fairly busy!

All projects will be announced in the Pew Leaflet.

## **Would you like to help?**

**If you can hold a paintbrush, use a broom, help carry or hold things, do woodwork or metalwork, climb high ladders safely, plaster or point with mortar, and most importantly, if you can make a good cup of tea or coffee and know where the biscuits are kept, you are very much needed in the Maintenance Team.**

# We're not yolking.... We had a flippin marvellous pancake party!

On Saturday 14th February (Valentine's Day) we had a great pancake party breakfast at the church hall. The pancakes were delicious and the variety of toppings couldn't be beaten! This year there was even a Bailey's cream topping! The Jubilee room was filled with the aroma of freshly cooked pancakes and was buzzing with all the conversations and laughter. It's always so lovely to enjoy time together. There was no charge for the pancakes but people were very generous with their donations and together with the raffle, we raised £150. This will be put into our roof fund. Thank you to all who contributed.

Pancake Day or Shrove Tuesday is a special day celebrated in many countries. In some countries it is called "Mardi Gras" or Fat Tuesday. It comes before Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. Shrove Tuesday, Lent and Holy Week are all part of the journey towards Easter Day, the biggest Christian celebration of the year. It's a time when lots of people make time to think about

their life, trying to live God's way and remembering all that Jesus did.

Long ago Christians traditionally used up all the eggs and fat they had in store, by making pancakes and feasting on them. This was because in Lent they would eat less food, or even fast to help them to focus on God. Lots of people still give up something for Lent, such as chocolate, wine, biscuits etc. It's a time for contemplation and resisting temptation.

At St Matthew's this year, as well as people's own Lent actions, we are collecting more items to give to the Space 4 Food Bank. We are concentrating on not just the normal foods we collect, but with an emphasis on toiletries and more perishable items.

Many thanks to the pancake cooks, (who were flippin brilliant), Anne, Mary and Pat and those who served the pancakes and arranged the raffle.



# Discovering Stone Carving at Durham Cathedral

Charles Martin

My wife Joanne had booked me onto a one-day stone masonry lesson advertised by Durham Cathedral, and for a few hours I got to step into the boots of the craftsmen who have shaped its walls for centuries.

The task for the day was carving St Cuthbert's Cross, the distinctive emblem linked to Cuthbert of Lindisfarne and the cathedral's long spiritual history. After carefully marking out the design, I began chiselling away the background so the cross would stand proud in relief.

The first strike of the mallet was nerve-racking stone offers no second chances. But as the hours passed, the

rhythm of chisel on limestone became steady and satisfying. Gradually, the shape emerged: clean lines, balanced arms, simple but powerful.

By the end of the session, my cross wasn't perfect but it was mine. More importantly, I'd gained a deep respect for the patience and precision behind every carved detail in the cathedral.

What began as a thoughtful Christmas gift turned into something far more meaningful: a hands-on connection to Durham's living tradition of craft, and a day I won't forget.



# Lunch Club

The group enjoyed their usual excellent Christmas lunch, complete with a delicious two course Christmas meal with a cheese board, mince pies, crackers and drinks. The works!

Anne, Mary, Vera and Mavis started the lunches up again after the Christmas break. It is a wonderful club and all those who attend thoroughly enjoy their meal and the company.



## Church Hall cupboard renovations



Anne, Mary and Dave have been very busy clearing out the large walk-in cupboard at the church hall. It's all been painted, including the floor and the shelves have all been revamped. There will soon be a freezer being installed. Now they have plenty of room to store all extra crockery and equipment. Such a good job!

**THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL**  
A six-session study course in sharing faith  
**PAULA GOODER**

*"We need to return to the gospel, to recover it, to see the Church again as a company of missionary disciples and to proclaim the faith with confidence and with creativity to a new generation."*  
STEVEN CROTT



# 2026 Lent Reflection

For this year's Lent Reflection, we were invited to join with our friends at St Michael & All Angels at Houghton. We all enjoyed last years Lent Course and we were more than happy to join them again.

This year the course is based on Paula Gooder's book, "The Joy of the Gospel", which in itself is based on Pope Francis' inspiring reflections on sharing the love of God. It is widely recognised as being full of realistic wisdom and infectious enthusiasm for reaching out to others with the joy that comes from a personal encounter with God.

Our first session was very relaxed, informative and encouraged us to reflect on God's love and the joy in the gospel and when we have felt this love. We then went on to reflect on how we can pass on this love and joy. There is much to glean and reflect on in these weekly sessions.

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**RJ**  
**LYD**  **ATT**  
**PLUMBING & HEATING SERVICES**

**RJ Lydiatt**

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# Easter Services

## At St. Matthew's Church

### **Palm Sunday 29th March**

9:45am Holy Communion

*A service of celebration for all ages together*

### **Wednesday 1st April**

10.00am Holy Communion

*A simple service, which is held every week.*

### **Maundy Thursday 2nd April**

7.00pm Holy Communion

*A poignant service of reflection.*

### **Good Friday 3rd April**

2.00pm Hour at the Cross

*A quiet, reflective service remembering the death of Jesus.*

### **Easter Sunday 5th April**

9:45am Holy Communion

We celebrate Easter together

## Notices & Information

**FLOWER ARRANGING ROTA**  
**Flower preparation Friday 9am.**  
**All welcome, no experience needed.**

Mrs Lydiatt, Mrs French, Mrs Martin,  
Mrs Lawson, Mrs Eden

### **FLOWER FUND DONATIONS**

Flowers for Christmas in memory of  
past members of St. Matthews  
Church

3 Anonymous donations for flowers

Donation in memory of Rita Wilson  
from Husband John

Flowers in memory of loved ones

Donation for Flowers in memory of  
Sue Holmes

Christmas Flowers in Memory of Enid  
and Bill Towers from Denise and  
Family

Flowers for the anniversary of Enid  
Towers from Denise and family

Donations from the church flower box

Christmas memories of Brian Gould  
from Margaret

Anniversary and Christmas  
memories of Jack and Peg Smith a  
much-loved Dad, Mam and Gran  
from Carole, Brian and Family

Donation for Christmas flowers from  
Margaret Freeman

Donation to flower fund

Donation of Mothering Sunday  
Flowers in memory of Enid Towers  
from Denise and Family

### **FABRIC FUND DONATIONS**

2 anonymous donations

2 donations to the roof fund

Donation in loving memory of mam &  
dad from the Galley family

Donation in memory of sister  
Kathleen from Susan & Tom

### **A J LINDSAY HOME IMPROVEMENTS & REPAIRS**

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# St. Matthew's Church & Community Hall

...part of the local community spirit

## Weekly Timetable

DAY	TIME	CLUB
Monday	6.30pm - 8.30pm	Judo (Brian)
Tuesday	10.00am - 12.00noon	Arts & Crafts Club (Kathleen)
Tuesday	6.30pm - 7.30pm	Karate
Wednesday	6.00pm-7.00pm	Zumba
Thursday	12.00pm - 1.30pm	Lunch Club
Thursday	6.30pm - 7.30pm	Karate
Friday	10.00am - 11.00am	Zumba Gold
Sunday	5.30pm - 6.30pm	Karate (Ed)

For all information on St. Matthew's Church and the Church Hall  
visit [www.stmatthewsnewbottle.org](http://www.stmatthewsnewbottle.org)

We're on Facebook  
St. Matthew's Church, Newbottle

