



## St Mary's Bellringers' Report for 2021

Throughout 2021 ringing at St. Mary's and throughout the country continued to be impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic. The year began with a third lockdown which lasted until almost the end of March and even the chiming of two bells for a service which we had been able to do for the previous four months was stopped. Via ZOOM and using a virtual Ringing Room the ringers continued to meet for the Thursday night practice!

The National Day of Reflection on 23rd March 2021 marked the anniversary of the first lockdown. The tenor bell was tolled 126 times in memory of the 126,000 people in the United Kingdom who had lost their lives to Covid by that date. On the 10th April the tenor was tolled 99 times to mark the passing of HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh.

Covid restrictions began to ease in the Spring and the chiming of two bells for service resumed on Easter Day. After a further easing of lockdown rules in May, we were able to have four ringers ringing for Sunday service – socially distanced, ringing alternate bells and in masks. At last, in August, we were able to hold the first Thursday practice for 17 months and on the 22nd August, we rang six bells for Sunday service. We were also able to return to wedding ringing in the summer and rang for eight weddings.

Through the autumn and winter, we continued to ring for Sunday services and hold our regular Thursday practice – Covid permitting. Numbers within the tower were still restricted and in December with the arrival of the Omicron variant ringing in masks became mandatory again. The year ended with ringing for Christmas Day.

Julie Bell (Secretary St. Mary's Ringers)

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## BOOKWORMS ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

It has been a great pleasure for our small group of Bookworms to have, after a very long break, felt that we could meet in each other's homes once again.

Lively discussion and a glass of wine have lost none of their charm.

We have enjoyed several books

Including: My Antonia by Willa Cather, A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles and The Thursday Murder Club by Richard Osman.

We plan an evening of poetry reading in April.

Some of our books are available from The Northumberland Library Service however we also source our own from time to time which allows us a wider choice of titles.

Currently we feel that our small group is sensible as we can spread out when we meet, however as the situation with Covid improves we shall again be happy to welcome new members.

Eileen Smith



## **Finance & Charitable Giving Group**

This Group has two main areas of responsibility, the monitoring of income and expenditure; and making recommendations to the PCC on its Charitable Gifts.

The major recommendation regarding budgets has been to balance the PCC's expenditure so that the loss of income due to the impact of Covid-19 did not cause any serious cash flow problems. The main mechanism to achieve this balance was to restrict the amount paid in Parish Share. The final amount paid towards Parish Share was £66,000.

Each year the PCC makes five donations of £200 to a charity. This £1,000 is a small proportion of the money donated to charities by our parish. The policy of the PCC is that small local charities should be supported. Each year a new charity replaces the charity that had been on the list the longest. This means that a charity receives £200 for 5 years.

The 5 charities supported in 2021 were:

- The Shirley Community (added 2017)
- Kirkley Hall Conservation Programme (added 2018)
- WECAN Hexham (added 2019)
- Safe Families (added 2020)
- West End Refugee Service (added 2021)

The Group welcome any suggestions for charities that will be considered in 2022.

Clive Ringrose



### **Children's Society Committee Report April 2021 - end of March 2022**

The Children's Society exists to provide help for vulnerable children in England and Wales irrespective of their ethnicity or religion. Our committee provides funds for this work.

This year began well with the sale of Kay Harper's knitted chicks and bunnies with chocolate egg filling - £100.

Rosy collected the house box money from July to September - £868-33. Box-holders had found it hard to save cash this year as many businesses prefer payment by card.

Our big event was the Coffee Morning on November 20th. Everyone seemed very pleased to have a social event once again. This brought in £490-50.

Usually we gather generous funds on Christmas Eve at the two children's services. However this year our members were reluctant to participate as the Omicron variant of Covid-19 was starting. Just as well as some of us had no family celebrations due to this illness.

Paul gave us contributions from two Richard Coates school class services £81-93.

So we finished this year with a total of £1,510-87 (only half of 2019-20).

The Society keeps us informed of its work via our Northeast Community Relationship Manager Gill Dean. She sends our members a lively monthly newsletter online.

Rosy Doherty

Hon. Treasurer.

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### Choir Report



It's always a pleasure to report on how the choir have been keeping themselves busy this year; this one being a welcome return to some form of normality!

Last Lent and Eastertide was musically made up of pre-recorded singing, Team A and Team B in church, and Michelle cantoring. It did require a significant amount of thought and preparation, and I'm incredibly grateful for the input of those involved. There have been moments where we've had to relearn how to 'choir' after such a long break.

The relaxation of social distancing has been beneficial to singing, as standing 2 metres away from a fellow chorister makes blending, tuning, and general musicianship really tricky. As ever, the choir rose to the challenge, and we are very lucky to have the wonderful chancel space in which to sing.

A church choir is quite unique with respect to repertoire. Most choirs will have their set list for the term, but our list changes every week. There's never a dull moment! New music is slowly being introduced and learned, some of which you will have heard over this year's Holy Week.

The pandemic was a time to review the choral commitment with respect to worship, and we agreed that having an Evensong for special festivals throughout the year was the right direction. Our most recent Evensong was in celebration of St Cuthbert - a wonderful service with music and themes inspired by the north. The choir sang beautifully, and it was wonderful to welcome friends from the Deanery.

We have been on somewhat of a recruitment drive as we emerge out of lockdown restrictions, so if you (or anyone you know) might be interested, it's definitely worth coming along to one of our Thursday rehearsals. 'Try before you buy' if you like! It does absolute wonders for the spirit and is great for the soul. We have quite a laugh on Thursday nights, and a shared sense of supplementing worship at St Mary's.

Thank you to everyone for your encouraging, kind and lovely comments with everything we do - the choir and I wholeheartedly appreciate it. Our purpose is principally to sing to the glory of God, and sharing that fellowship with you all is an honour. We conclude rehearsals with this prayer, so it feels appropriate to conclude my report with it too:

The Chorister's Prayer

*Bless, O Lord, us thy servants,  
who minister in thy temple.  
Grant that what we sing with our lips,  
we may believe in our hearts,  
and what we believe in our hearts,  
we may show forth in our lives.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Warren Smith

Music Director

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**CHURCH MISSION SOCIETY**

2021 was the 17<sup>th</sup> year St Mary's and Holy Saviour have been supporting our link missionaries Eric and Sandra Read in The Philippines. Thanks to modern technology we have been able to keep in touch with them via e-mail throughout what has been a turbulent year to say the least.

The Philippines Government acted fairly quickly with a Covid vaccination programme, so they were able to get some protection early in the pandemic, but their plans to visit the UK were still undecided. Sadly Eric & Sandra had not seen their daughter Attiyah for over two years, she is studying law and is attached to a firm of solicitors here in the UK, and their son Peter is studying forensic science but was finding the on-line lectures difficult.

Work on their farm continued throughout the year despite storms (where they lost 60 banana trees) flooding, hurricanes, and coronavirus. Their church work continued and expanded by offering coffee and cakes and bible studies which attracted a surprising number of men from the town nearby!

At last, by the end of the year they had made plans and booked flights to come to the UK on home assignment. In their Easter e-mail they said they had sold their house in Devon and purchased another in Shropshire which needed a lot of work doing on it. At that stage they hoped to visit St Mary's Church some time early in 2022.

Last year our two churches promised to raise £3,000 for them, and we are delighted to say that despite the coronavirus and all the restriction, we exceeded this amount which is an amazing achievement. Thank you once again to all our supporters.

In case you did not see the four-minute video they sent; it is still possible to view it at the following link

<https://hidrive.ionos.com/lnk/MHBSBWZX>

Anne and John Brown

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### Churches Together



Many events have not been possible in the past year because of the government restrictions. The Forum of representatives began meeting again in the autumn.

Firstly, on a rather sad note the United Reformed Church in Darras Hall has not been able to continue in the Broadway but after due debate has been joined with St John's Wideopen. It is hoped that occasional services will be able to restart in Broadway eventually.

Church services in the three remaining churches began again during 2021 but often with reduced attendance.

Monthly ecumenical prayers began again on 13th December and continued on the second Monday of the month thereafter. We usually number up to 10 from Ponteland Methodist Church, St Matthew's and St Mary's and meet in turn in all three churches.

We note that Fr. O'Kane will be retiring from regular duties in spring 2022 to be replaced by Fr. M. Anthony Hastie. We send our best wishes to Fr O'Kane as he enters this new phase of his life.

Christmas Services were advertised in Pont News and Views. We were unable to create the usual Christmas card.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity took place at the end of January. We held mid-day services on Monday Wednesday and Friday of the week and attracted good numbers.

We have replaced the Lent Bible Study with a study day entitled 'Living in Love and Faith', open to all.

Jane Lewis has stepped down from coordinating Christian Aid in the area. Christian Aid is reviewing the effectiveness of house-to-house collections as receipts nationally have been gradually getting less. Helen Cunningham the regional organiser is going to meet us to discuss ways forward.

The Remembrance Sunday commemoration at the war memorial took place as in previous years.

The World Day of Prayer led by women service took place in St Matthews Church on 4th March supported by members of the three churches and was well attended.

Know Your Neighbourhood is an outreach to try to attend to some of the social problems, loneliness, old age, isolation etc in our community. This has been slow starting but now that restrictions are easing a start has been made with weekly meditation sessions. Hopefully this will develop in different ways as time goes on.

Preparations for a resumption of Party in the Park are well under way although some of the businesses have been unable to make such generous donations as before Covid.

John Doherty March 2022

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### **Report on Newcastle West Deanery 2021**

The Newcastle West Deanery Synod met three times in 2020. In March the main topic was Eco Church, with several parishes now signed up to the scheme. In June Synod was joined by Canon Rob Saner-Haigh, Director of Ministry and Mission, and in September by Ven Rachel Wood, the newly appointed Archdeacon of Northumberland.

At the end of November Revd Canon Christine Brown stood down as Area Dean. Revd James McGowan (St James & St Basil Fenham) is now Area Dean, working with Revd Allison Harding (Newburn) as Assistant Area Dean

Meg Fisher (Parish of Holy Spirit Denton) continues as Lay Chair, and Janice Stait (St John Whorlton) as Deanery Finance Officer. There is a vacancy for the role of Secretary to Synod.

Two longstanding vacancies were filled this year. In September Fr Waldemar Nion, who served his curacy in this deanery, became part time priest in charge of Holy Nativity Chapel House. In October Revd Daniel McCarthy joined us from St Albans Diocese, licensed for three years as Interim Minister of Holy Cross

Towards the end of the year, it was announced that Fr Alan Paterson, Vicar of St Peter Cowgate and Priest in Charge of St Wilfrid Newbiggin Hall, was to move to a new parish in Walker.

We appreciate the support of retired and associate clergy, and clergy with Cathedral or Diocesan roles for each of our parishes in vacancy.

Two of our curates, Revd Oliver Dempsey (Cowgate and Newbiggin Hall) and Revd Rosemary Harrison (Ponteland) were ordained priest in July. Revd Dempsey has since transferred to St George and St Hilda Jesmond to continue his curacy. Revd Miriam Jones was ordained

Deacon and began her curacy in Newburn parish. Clergy continued to meet regularly for discussion and support.

The new approach to Parish Share asks parishes to make their offer direct to the Diocese; due to the financial challenges of the COVID situation, a contingency fund was created across the Diocese to manage the deficit in 2020 and 2021. The previous Deanery Share allocation has therefore not operated in the same way.

The Deanery Synod and Deanery Development Group continue to explore possibilities for parishes to work more closely together and to share our resources and gifts, in line with the Diocesan vision and mission strategy.

Thank you to Janet Welsh, Michelle Smith and June Atkinson who are the elected Synod Representatives from this parish.

Rev Canon Christine Brown

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### **Electoral Roll Officer Report 2022**

The Electoral Roll has been refreshed up to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and we now have 194 named on the current roll.

By enrolling you become a voting member of the Church of England and so help to ensure that all the synodical councils of the Church – the Parochial Church Council, the Deanery Synod and the Diocesan and General Synods are fully representative of its members.

Alan Barron (Electoral Roll Officer)

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### **Financial Summary**

The effects of Covid-19 have continued to have a significant impact on the PCC's finances. There were signs of recovery with some areas of income up on their 2020 levels, but most remain below their pre-pandemic levels.

The PCC had agreed a reduced Parish Share with the diocese of £65,000. Despite the loss of income, the PCC managed to pay £66,000.

**Unrestricted Income:** The main item of income is Planned Giving. In 2021 this dropped by 7% to £71,926. This drop is larger than in recent years. The drop in planned giving resulted in less gift aid being claimed. This is 14% down on pre-Covid levels.

Open plate collections at £8,632, were up significantly on the previous year, (£4,347), but down on 2019 (£10,999).

A new source of income was from the Contact-less giving machine. This generated £1,384 during the year. Most of its use was at baptisms, but there were regular contributions throughout the week from visitors.

The income from hiring out the Parish Centre was £10,644. This was an increase from £7,281 in 2020 but were still below 2019 when £19,178 was received.

Unrestricted Expenditure: The largest item of expenditure is Parish Share. For 2021 the diocese set a figure of £97,884. After discussions with the diocese a figure of £65,000 was agreed. The PCC exceeded this by a small amount and paid £66,000.

Expenditure on running and maintaining the churches was up from the previous year by £2,839, or 14%. The largest items were: St Mary's gas up £436, Church Internet £600, Boiler repairs £500, Contact-less giving machine £360, Electrical and sound repairs £450.

Restricted Income: The restricted income in 2021 was £40,499. The largest items were £8,000 from 2 legacies and a donation of £4,000 that will be used to repair the windows. Collections from weddings and funerals towards refurbishment projects were a significant source of income.

A change to the accounting procedure has included fees paid to the diocese. In 2021 £8,632 was collected in fees and paid to the Diocese.

Restricted Expenditure: Excluding fee money that the PCC forwarded to the diocese and others, £21,000 was spent on numerous projects. The largest being the installation of the toilet at Holy Saviour, which cost £7,870. Other large items were £3,200 on repointing the floor at St Mary's and £900 repairing the flagpole.

Reserves: Since 2013 the PCC has had a Reserves Policy based on Church of England guidance notes. The policy of the PCC is to maintain its reserves equal to 3 months expenditure. At the end of 2021 the unrestricted reserves were £46,295. This was an increase in the year of £5,334.

£6,000 was added to the designated fund for the repair or replacement of the heating of St Mary's and £2,000 was added to the fund for the improvement of 2 Grange Road.

CR 14/3/2022



### Friends of St Mary's 2021

We are pleased to report that we have survived the pandemic and starting to see a recovery in our activities. While like everyone the last 12 months have proved challenging. However, we have continued to

increase our membership and fund small projects in and around the Church. As things begin to return to normal, we will continue to promote the use of the Church in different ways and hope to plan our activities for the coming year. Thank you to all who have supported our efforts to date.

David Comeskey

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### **Grapevine – Editorial Report**

At present, 400/450 copies of each issue are printed by Ponteland Print. Colin Morgan has been unfailingly helpful each month despite all the difficulties. A team of about 50 distributors, organised by Sue Simmons, delivers about 400 copies to subscribers' homes. The past two 'Covid' years have difficult, but it has been particularly rewarding to receive so much positive feedback from people who have enjoyed being cheered by a simple little magazine during some stressful times.

Copies are sent free of charge to local residential homes, to other Ponteland church leaders, the leader of the Brownies, etc. Copies are also left in St Mary's Church and Holy Saviour, for friendly hand-outs at Baptisms or for visitors to read or purchase.

By placing the magazine on the website during the Covid period we have managed to reach out to most people who have enjoyed finding it there, but now that we are beginning to get to grips with real life again, the website will no longer carry the complete magazine. Advertising has dropped off, as business have felt the squeeze of financial circumstances. We view the magazine as an outreach tool, a link between those people who attend the church and those who do not but nevertheless consider themselves as Christians with an interest in St Mary's church. Even so we need to cover costs. Paper and printing costs have been rising for some time of course, so reluctantly, we have raised the price of the magazine. It had been 40p for many, many years and was increased to 50p a copy more than ten years ago!

Grapevine is issued ten times a year at a cost of £10 per year or £1 per magazine. Advertising is dealt with most efficiently by Elaine Nylander and this helps to offset printing costs. At Christmas and in summer holiday time, we produce a maximum 32-page double issue which covers two months.

I have therefore tried to produce a magazine with plenty of hope and uplift sandwiched between its pages! I am very much indebted to the stalwart providers of thought provoking or entertaining articles who have kept me supplied with items each month. I hope that our church's involvement in the community is reflected in the pages of the magazine, and that the magazine offers something of interest to new families too.

Anyone wishing to join our team or contribute an article, would be warmly welcomed!

Alison Ringrose, Editor, March 2022



**Holy Saviour, Milbourne**

This year was affected by the “Virus” and service times etc were controlled by the need to take sensible precautions. At the time of writing things are slowly returning to normal.

The pattern of services has fully resumed, normally a weekly communion at 11.15 and a monthly morning service.

The maximum attendance was 25 on 12th September

Funerals-- 1 Baptism--1

Thanks are due to all those who contribute to the running of the church.

The main event this year was the installation of the toilet after a very long gestation period. It has been erected at the rear of the building. A new access pathway to it has been provided.

Duncan Wheeler

2nd April 2022

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**Mothers' Union Report**

**Diocese of Newcastle**

The MU have been meeting monthly since the end of 2021. We have had some interesting and informative talks of late from our vicar, Rev. Paul, our curate, Rev. Rosemary and Siti Hill. We enjoyed a belated Christmas Faith Lunch in January 2022 which was well attended. Ponteland Branch also hosted the Lady Day Service on Friday 25 March attended by our President and Vice President as well as members from other branches in the Deanery

Ponteland MU continues to be involved with Harbour Refuge, a place which aids women and children suffering domestic abuse by providing a safe, supportive haven for them. This year we provided a Christmas Day lunch together with teatime treats for 16 separate families in partnership with Tesco, Kingston Park. The refuge has asked for our help to raise money to equip a Sensory Room for the children. These children arrive at the refuge confused and traumatised and a calm retreat where they can begin to rebuild their shattered lives with the help of trained councillors is very important. This project is ongoing.

Lynne Henderson - Branch Leader



**ST MARY'S PARISH CENTRE, THORNHILL ROAD, PONTELAND**

After reading last year's annual report I note that following the easing of Covid restrictions, the Parish Centre re-opened to adult groups on the 17th May 2021 (and 12th April for children). Regretfully some groups still didn't feel it was safe to return and so income was very slow to recover.

Unfortunately, our costs continued at the same level and so we incurred losses, funded by Church reserves.

As a result of this, plans for refurbishment were put on hold although we continued with essential maintenance to encourage our hirers to return.

CURRENT POSITION: Total annual income from all contracted hirers for this year will be £19,216.00 but this does not include single hirers such as children's parties at the weekend, which are now starting to pick up.

Expenditure for the 12 months ended 31st December 2021 was £19,711.00 so even with income from parties we may only just break even.

WAY FORWARD: I have discussed this with the Vicar and we recommend to the meeting that we continue with the proposed improvements as soon as we receive the appropriate funding.

I have obtained estimates for some of the required work and now outline my work in obtaining costings for some of these improvements: -

1. Opening up of the wall. In the large cupboard in the hall - allowing access to the outside storeroom together with replacing the outside door and also the fire doors at the rear of the hall.....£4,575.00

2. The large doors at the front entrance continue to cause problems and I had hoped they could be replaced with electrically operated glass & aluminium doors which would allow easier disabled access. But the cost was £3612 and it was felt Hall Users may lose the fobs required to open the doors. So we are now looking to refurbish the existing doors and I await costings.

3. I have two costings for redecoration which Ruth and I feel is essential if we are to retain existing bookings and also encourage new ones.

Cost.....£2,500.00

4. I met with our plumber, and he is to estimate the removal of the urinals in the gent's toilet and replace all sanitary ware in both the Ladies & the Gents toilets.

5. Awaiting costings to replace kitchen units and flooring.

6. I understand that the Vicar is to cover replacing the chairs in his application for funding the cost of replacing the chairs in the Church.

It is now almost seven years since taking on this role and I find it difficult to continue the job due to increasing health problems. I therefore wish to give notice that I will retire as soon as a replacement can be found.

I should like to thank Ruth, our Church Administrator for her excellent support for The Parish Centre. She is truly a great ambassador for St Mary's.

Ted Henderson, Manager, St Mary's Parish Centre

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### **Rainbows Report**



Rainbows have enjoyed completing the Rainbow programme. They learn new skills, complete badges both in the unit and at home. By completing so many badges the Rainbows then go on to achieve Bronze, Silver and Gold awards. Which several Rainbows achieved.

The Rainbows completed the North East England Girlguiding 50th Birthday Challenge badge, this included completing activities from around the North East. Some of the activities included bush tucker trails and making bridges out of pasta and marshmallows.

They got crafty making gifts for Father's Day and Christmas.

We had a Halloween party where the Rainbows enjoyed bobbing for apples and trying to get doughnuts off a string using just their mouth.

Rainbows joined the Ponteland Remembrance Parade for the first time.

We donated food to St Mary's Church Harvest festival and also food, toys and Christmas treats to Throckley and Newburn food bank.

We had a Christmas Party where the girls enjoyed playing games, eating food and turning Rev Captain Paul into a snowman.

We finished the year by going to the cinema to see Disney's Encanto.

We would like to say a big thank you to St Mary's Church for everything you do for 6th Ponteland (St Mary's) Rainbows.

Judy Middlemiss

## Safeguarding Report for 2021



We continue to place importance on Safeguarding in our Church Life at National, Diocesan and Parish level. This applies to children, young people and adults who may be at risk.

The Parish Responsible Safeguarding Group reviews safeguarding for the Parish and reports to the PCC

### Members for 2021:

Canon Christine Brown: Clergy Lead

Rosemary Rhodes: Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)

Peter Hopley: PCC Representative

The Parish Safeguarding Policy was reviewed in July and is displayed on the notice boards of the churches and Parish.

The COVID restrictions though reduced have continued to affect activity and meetings with The Diocesan Safeguarding team have remained on zoom.

### Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS):

This continues to be done online by APCS (Access Personal Checking Service).

All those in the Parish requiring a DBS check are up to date. APCS has required a DBS check to be renewed every 5 Years but from the 1st. January 2022 this changes to every 3 years.

### Parish Dashboard:

This online Audit Tool has now been introduced across the Diocese to promote good practice. Ponteland Parish worked this year towards the highest level 3 standard. This involved the PCC reviewing arrangements and developing new procedures.

Two new PCC members completed their safeguarding training. Training needs to be updated every 3 years. 2 items remain to be resolved, one being some training that is overdue. All PCC members have access to the Dashboard.

Further information is available on the Parish or Diocesan website

Rosemary Rhodes



## TRAIDCRAFT

Due to ongoing restrictions and safety concerns over the Covid pandemic, all Wednesday and Sunday stalls were cancelled for the first 10 months of 2021 and sales largely relied on orders placed by a few regular customers during this period. Such support was very much appreciated. The return of regular stalls at the beginning of November was therefore particularly welcome and ensured that Christmas sales were highly encouraging. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Barbara Munro for her invaluable help with stalls on Sunday mornings.

While continuing to pioneer the future of fair trade, Traidcraft also have environmental justice at the heart of everything they do. Climate change has gradually become a bigger and bigger challenge since Traidcraft was founded, giving rise to increasing concern about the killer effects it is having on us and all their innovative partners across the world. Fair trade farmers and artisans respect and care for the environment. These producers are among those who are seeing the most damaging effects of climate change, despite being among those who have the smallest carbon output. Many fair-trade farmers and producers care for the environment by committing to a range of eco-activities including maximising their use of sustainable energy and raw materials, reducing their water usage, minimising waste and pollution, protecting the soil by practising organic farming methods, reducing deforestation by intercropping trees and crops and receiving training on mitigating the killer effects of climate change. We could all play our part in helping the environment by switching a non-fair-trade product for its fair trade counterpart in our weekly shop. Choosing to buy fair trade, ethical food and drink is everyday activism and is the simplest way to change the world.

Stalls are currently scheduled for the first Sunday of the month after the 10 a.m. service in the Parish Centre, with a small stall after the 10 a.m. service in Church on the 2nd or 3rd Wednesday. The full range of Traidcraft goods can be viewed at [traidcraftshop.co.uk](http://traidcraftshop.co.uk), though catalogues are available for anyone wanting to browse through a paper edition. For further information or to place any orders, please do not hesitate to contact me. All orders will normally be delivered within a few days.

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