



ST BRANDON'S PARISH CHURCH, BRANCEPETH

**ANNUAL REPORT
(INCLUDING ACCOUNTS)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2025**

Priest-in-Charge:

Vacancy

Lay Chair:

Mike Higton

Banks:

The Co-operative Bank
PLC
PO Box 101
1 Balloon Street
Manchester
M60 4EP

&

CCLA
One Angel Lane
London
EC4R 3AB

Registered Charity no. 1204196

Background

St Brandon's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent (when the parish is not in vacancy) in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC also has responsibility for maintaining the churchyard.

Reference and Administrative Details

Members of PCC are either ex-officio, elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), or coopted by the PCC, in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. During the year the following served as members of the PCC:

Ex-officio

Priest-in-charge: *Vacant*
Associate Minister: Alison Hobbs
Churchwarden: Carol Beeby
Churchwarden (and Lay Chair): Mike Higton
Deanery Synod Representative: Peter Bailey
Deanery Synod Representative: Jane Stout

Elected membership (up to 9 members)

Janette Foxe (elected 2020, 2023)
Kenneth Howe (elected 2022, re-elected 18.5.2025)
Vickie Jackson (elected 18.5.2025)
Alison Moore (elected 18.5.25)
Catrin Morgan (elected 2023)
Sue Morgan (co-opted 2018; elected 2019, 2022; until 18.5.25)
Hanna Polhilko (elected 18.5.25)
Colin Waterman, Secretary (elected 2023)

Objectives and Activities

The statement of purpose for St Brandon's is:

- to provide opportunities for encounter between God and people;
- to offer silence, sacrament, celebration and recollection for all phases of human need and searching;
- to provide a prayerful, caring, safe and learning environment;
- to be a welcoming, inclusive and invigorating community;
- to reach out to local, national and international concerns with prayer and practical help; and
- to seek peace and reconciliation with the help of God's grace.

The primary activities revolve around the provision of specific opportunities for encounter between God and people, especially services for worship, celebration and recollection in which God is encountered by all ages, and received in sacrament and word, including:

- the Eucharist;
- baptisms, marriages and funerals; and
- thanksgivings, blessings and other occasional offices.

Other activities which flow from this, and which also directly support the statement of purpose, are as follows:

- a prayer network that supports the work of the church in all its manifestations;
- opportunities in groups to hear, explore and practise the Christian faith;
- opportunities for catechism for baptism and confirmation, and for marriage preparation;
- pastoral care to and beyond members of the church community; and
- opportunities for private prayer and devotion.

In addition, the church makes provision for:

- young people from the village and beyond;
- visitors and pilgrims;
- education / training days / non-residential conferences;
- quiet days / non-residential retreats;
- concerts / organ recitals / bell ringing and other musical events; and
- exhibitions and festivals.

Structure, Governance and Management

Committees

The PCC operates through several committees and teams, the most significant of which are:

Standing Committee

This is the only committee required by law. It has the power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any decision given by the PCC.

Fabric & Finance Committee

This was formed in 2018 to take over the role of the former Fabric Committee and to incorporate oversight of the church's financial affairs. Its terms of reference were reviewed in March 2025.

Worship Team

This team handles practical matters relating to the worship of the church, covering both the regular Sunday services and various additional services at festivals, and keeping in touch with the Messy Church team. Its terms of reference were reviewed in March 2025.

Admin Team

This team was formed in 2009 to deal with communications and daily running of the church, including church hire, the monthly newsletter delivered to every household in the parish, the website and, more recently, social media. Its terms of reference were reviewed in March 2025.

Risk management

The PCC is responsible for the management of the risks faced by St Brandon's Church. Risks are identified and controls established throughout the year. A formal review of the risk and management processes is undertaken on an annual basis.

The key controls used include:

- formal agendas for all committee activity;
- detailed terms of reference for all committees;
- formal written policies;
- clear recruitment process for people in key roles;
- clear authorisation and approval levels; and
- formal risk assessments.

Through the risk management processes established for St Brandon's Church, the PCC is satisfied that all major risks have been identified and have been adequately mitigated where necessary. It is recognised, however, that this can provide only reasonable assurance that major risks have been adequately managed.

Financial policies

The PCC has a policy of holding between four- and six-months' running costs in unrestricted reserves, which at present equates to around £21,500 to £32,500. This is sufficient to meet the day-to-day needs of the organisation and to ensure financial stability, whilst not retaining excessive funds that should be used towards the purpose of the organisation.

The PCC holds four restricted funds:

- the Appeal/HLF Fund, which was raised following the fire in 1998 and supplemented by funds raised during a later stonework repair project, is to be used for the restoration and repair of the church building;
- a Tower Fund, which contains funds dedicated for maintenance of the bells and support of bell ringing;
- a Flower Guild fund, which contains funds dedicated to supporting the work of the flower team; and
- a Charitable Donations Fund, which is used for temporarily holding funds which have been given to the church for onward donation to other charities.

Grant-making policy

Each year the PCC makes grants of up to 10% of unrestricted income to a small number of selected charitable bodies whose aims are in accordance with St Brandon's stated objectives,

and especially the objective 'To reach out to local, national and international concerns with prayer and practical help'. The list of charities supported is reviewed by the PCC each year.

In 2025, we matched previous years' donations to A Rocha UK, the Children's Society, Durham Action on Single Housing, the Durham-Lesotho Link, and USPG; we also collected money for Christian Aid, and gathered donations in kind for the Durham Foodbank, Blythwood Care and the Salvation Army. In 2025 we also made a one-off donation to the Disasters Emergency Committee Middle East Humanitarian Appeal.

The PCC does not accept applications for grants from individuals or organisations.

Authorisation limits

The treasurer is authorised to make all routine/expected payments in relation to existing church activities. The treasurer is also authorised to make payments of up to £250 on unexpected expenditure, where that expenditure clearly arises from the ordinary pursuit of existing church activities. The Fabric & Finance Committee is authorised to agree expenditure up to £500 on matters relating to the routine upkeep of the building and churchyard. Any proposed expenditure above these limits is agreed in advance by PCC or (in an emergency) by Standing Committee. Where necessary, such agreement may be sought by circulation.

Safeguarding

St Brandon's PCC has adopted the Church of England and Diocese of Durham policies regarding safeguarding and has put in place safeguarding policies and procedures consistent with these. All members of the church involved in work with children and vulnerable adults have undertaken diocesan training to the required level. All members of the church involved in work with children and vulnerable adults have appropriate and up-to-date DBS checks. A safeguarding checklist is completed annually and submitted to Standing Committee and the PCC. Policy and procedure is followed in the event of any safeguarding concerns that arise, and such concerns are reported to the PCC and shared appropriately with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. The PCC follows Safer Recruitment and People Management processes, in line with Church of England requirements, for all the church's volunteers and teams.

Data protection

St Brandon's PCC follows a Data Protection Policy, published on the church website, along with a Data Privacy Notice. These are reviewed annually.

The Proceedings of the PCC and Mission and Ministry of the Church in 2025

PCC

The PCC met six times in 2025 to discuss and support all the activities mentioned below. Information was received from Admin Team, the Climate Action Group, Fabric & Finance Committee, the Partnership for Missional Church group, the Parish Safeguarding Officer, Worship Team, and the leaders of Messy Church, Sunday School and Youth Club. The PCC is grateful to all who work in these areas for the time they give to the church's life.

The Electoral Roll was fully revised in 2025. The number on the roll in May 2025 was 58.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Electoral Roll	111	96	99	99	99	96	97	58

Worship

Throughout the year, the church provided services of worship and prayer. Service leadership and preaching were shared between the Associate Minister, the Reader, Revd Jane Grieve, the Revd Deborah Hodge, Dr Hester Higton, Prof Mike Higton, and occasional visiting clergy. Invaluable support was provided by teams of sidespeople and sacristans.

Alongside Sunday morning services, we enjoyed an Ash Wednesday service; a Palm Sunday procession; contemplative eucharists on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week; a Maundy Thursday service with foot-washing; several Good Friday and Easter services, including the Dawn Vigil; an Ascension Day service; services of Evensong with the Durham Cathedral Consort of Singers and St John's College Choir; an All Souls' Day service; a Remembrance service with two-minutes' silence; and a full range of Christmas services.

Morning Prayer was held daily, Monday to Friday, including prayers for the parish, diocese, mission partners and individual needs. A midday eucharist was provided most weekdays in the Castle Chapel, under the auspices of the Community of the Well. Home communion services were provided as requested.

The Tech Team continued to livestream services on many Sunday mornings and some seasonal services.

Regular services (excluding holidays and special occasions) typically attracted between 35 and 40 adults and around 2 children / young people, with a handful of others joining online or watching the recording later. Messy Church attracted between 6 and 12 adults, and between 5 and 10 children. Attendance at major festivals was higher. For example, 120 people attended worship at services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Regular services	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Adults	49	50	50	50	45	46	47	45	37
Children	5	5	4	4	2	4	6	3	2

We are grateful to many people 'behind the scenes' who contributed to church life through the year: the Flower Guild, the cleaning teams and those who open and close the church each

day. St Brandon's remained open to visitors every day, with comments left which show the real impact of the peace and beauty of the building.

Prayer and pastoral care

Alongside all the prayer involved in the services described above, the Prayer and Pastoral Team

- responded to specific prayer requests;
- contributed to the monthly Newsletter 'prayer space';
- contacted and visited the sick and bereaved; and
- sent cards and flowers to mark life events and anniversaries.

Throughout the year, visitors left prayer requests in the Neville Chapel, which were noted and echoed at Morning Prayer each Thursday.

Those recently bereaved were invited to the All Souls service, and baptism and wedding contacts were invited to other suitable church services and events.

Occasional offices

As a Church of England parish church, we are available to our parishioners and members for baptisms, weddings and funerals, and we try to ensure that those who come for a service of celebration or at a time of sadness have a positive experience of church.

In 2025:

- four babies and children and two adults were baptised;
- nobody was married;
- five funerals were held in church.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Baptisms	10	8	9	7	3	1	9	4	7	3	6
Weddings	6	7	4	4	1	0	2	1	2	1	0
Funerals	5	6	4	2	3	0	2	3	3	8	5

Partnership for Missional Church

During 2025, the Diocesan Enabling Team (ET) led the PMC core group through Phase 3 ('Focusing') of the PMC process. The core group subsequently focused its attention on embedding and incorporating PMC practices and insights into the ongoing life of the Church. Towards the end of the year, the Core Group secured the PCC's endorsement for continued work, seeking God's wisdom for future developments.

Children, young people and families

Sunday School continued to share the Good News with children 'old enough to enjoy a story', using drama and craft activities. Two children attended regularly, with numbers increasing on baptism weeks. Sunday School ran throughout the year, with short breaks over the school holidays.

Messy Church met monthly, and the Messy Church team also provided activities in the Castle grounds at the Craft Fair in July, and in November in the church. Activities included a farm visit and a Christingle service.

All-age services were provided on Good Friday morning, Easter Day, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

In 2025 Youth Club followed its usual pattern meeting fortnightly in the Village Hall. In addition to the usual club nights with activities, ranging from games in the upper hall to quizzes downstairs, a summer BBQ was held in the Castle grounds.

We are grateful to all who support Sunday School, Messy Church and Youth Club.

Music

In February, St Brandon's musical life was hit hard by the sudden death of the church's organist, Richard Hird, who had played a major part in St Brandon's music over the previous ten years. During the spring, organ and piano accompaniment was provided by a selection of different musicians, including James Morgan (deputy organist), Martyn Jones, Edward Staines, and Durham students Alec Bell and Cian Tempest. Peter Downey was appointed as the church's organist in July.

Worship was also enhanced with music from the Village Choir, the St Brandon's Consort, and Wilfred Foxe on lute. Hester Higton continued to choose hymns, and co-ordinate some other aspects of the church's musical life. We are grateful to all those involved in our music.

The Durham University Society of Change Ringers continued to provide regular ringing for services during term time. In total, 33 quarter peals and four peals were rung at St Brandon's. James Morgan continued to act as Tower Captain.

Deanery and Ecumenical relationships

Deanery Synod representatives attended meetings whenever possible, as did the licensed clergy, bringing reports to the PCC, providing an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the Church.

St Brandon's is part of DH7 Churches Together, and some members attend their meetings.

St Brandon's continued to contribute regularly via the yellow bin in church to the Food Bank run by Durham Christian Partnership. On Mothering Sunday, gifts were brought for the Durham Women's Refuge. Christmas gifts were again collected for distribution by the Salvation Army in Langley Moor. We are grateful to those who organise these collections on our behalf.

Building and churchyard

The Fabric & Finance Committee has continued to meet quarterly. Follow-up on the 2023 Quinquennial Report involved some roof repairs, ongoing planning for a project to remove the old boiler house, scoping work for replacement of bulbs and switches in the church lighting system, and routine maintenance. The Committee also oversaw the installation of

boxes for swifts in the church tower. Edward Staines coordinated grass cutting and churchyard tidy-up events.

Events

In 2025 the church being hired on 8 occasions, raising a total of £2,061. Some hirers were old friends making a welcome return, whilst others were new to St Brandon's. Bookings were managed with grace and efficiency by Janette Foxe, aided by a team of volunteers to move chairs and welcome visitors.

Finances

Although the church's overall position remained challenging, in the autumn PCC agreed to pledge the full amount of Parish Share requested by the diocese for 2026. The PCC is hopeful that we can live up to that commitment while remaining within our reserves policy. Vickie Jackson, as treasurer, continued to look after the church accounts with care and efficiency.

The approved annual accounts follow.

Dated: 12 April 2026

Approved by St Brandon's Parochial Church Council and signed on its behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Higton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Higton (Lay Chair)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vickie Jackson', with a large, circular flourish at the beginning.

Vickie Jackson (Treasurer)

Independent examiner's report to the PCC of St Brandon's Church, Brancepeth

I report to members of the PCC on my examination of the accounts of the PCC of St Brandon's, Brancepeth for the year ended 31 December 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As members of the PCC you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the PCC's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

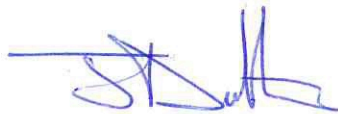
Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Name:

J DALTON

Address:

1 RECTORY (OTTAGE)
BRANCEPETH
CO. DURHAM

Date:

12 feb 2026



Brancepeth Parochial Church Council
Registered Charity No 12041926
Account Balances
As at: 31 December 2025

	As at 31/12/2024	As at 31/12/2025
	£	£
Co-operative Bank	28,816.36	27,030.32
CCLA	11,896.14	12,434.50
Total	40,712.50	39,464.82



Brancepeth Parochial Church Council
Registered Charity No 12041926
Balance Sheet
As at: 31 December 2025

	As at 31/12/2024	As at 31/12/2025
	£	£
Current assets		
Cash at bank and in hand	40,712	39,464.82
Represented by		
Unrestricted		
Unrestricted - General Fund	33,670	31,228.44
02 Restricted		
Restricted - Appeal + HLF Project	3,785	3,785.00
Restricted - Flower Guild		200.71
Restricted - Gates		500.00
Restricted - Charitable collections	104	311.07
Restricted - Tower fund	3155	3,441.10
	40,712	39,464.82
Funds of the Church	40,712	39,464.82

Restricted Funds

- The Appeal and Stonework Fund represents funds raised to carry out the rebuilding of the church and to repair its stonework.
- The Charitable Donations Fund represents funds raised on behalf of other charities, which are then to be passed onto those charities.
- The Tower Fund comprises of funds which are to be spent on the bell tower and bell-ringing activities.
- The Flower Club Fund comprises of funds held for the purposes of arranging flowers at the church.
- The Church Gates Fund represents donations made to cover the cost of maintenance of the church gates.

Brancepeth Parochial Church Council
Registered Charity No 12041926
Receipts and Payments Account
For the period from 01 January 2025 to 31 December 2025

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted (HLF + Appeal)	Restricted (Church Gates)	Restricted (Flower Guild)	Restricted (Charitable donations)	Restricted (Tower fund)	Total funds	Prior year total funds
<i>Receipts</i>								
Regular giving	34,239.90						34,239.90	33,791
Loose plate collections	1,317.46				443.57	286.10	2,047.13	3,656
All other giving	3,781.37		500.00	200.71			4,482.08	4121
Gift Aid recovered	9,810.73						9,810.73	10,434
Grants & VAT	4,177.28						4,177.28	5,074
Fundraising activities	2,254.10				3,107.84		5,361.94	390
Interest	538.36						538.36	975
Weddings and funerals	1,285.80						1,285.80	2,914
Trading activities								
Cards and booklets	351.87						351.87	489
Church hire	3,781.25						3,781.25	3,377
Newsletter	695.00						695.00	178
Membership fees	24.00						24.00	31
Other								
Total receipts	62,257.12		500.00	200.71	3,551.41	286.10	66,795.34	65,431
<i>Payments</i>								
Cost of fundraising activities	1,113.48						1,113.48	201
Charitable giving	5,700.00				3,344.34		9,044.34	4,575
Diocesan parish share	31,920.00						31,920.00	31,500
Salaries, wages and honorary	3,112.68						3,112.68	1,515
Clergy and staff expenses	0.00							861
Mission and evangelism costs								
General	126.49						126.49	678
Children and Youth	137.98						137.98	149
Messy Church	100.00						100.00	165
Church running costs								
Insurance	4,550.01						4,550.01	4,744
Audit	38.00						38.00	30

Phone & broadband	649.20					649.20	863
Organ tuning	798.31					798.31	1,167
Church maintenance	4,945.80					4,945.80	698
Cleaning	546.99					546.99	689
Security	2,083.86					2,083.86	2,649
Worship	1,559.33					1,559.33	1,315
Catering	117.78					117.78	61
Upkeep of churchyard							579
Safeguarding	96.03					96.03	38
Church utility bills							
Electricity	1,684.50					1,684.50	1,494
Gas	3,789.24					3,789.24	4,170
Newsletter	1,629.00					1,629.00	1,786
Stonework project							
Quinquennial inspection							
Other							549
Total expenditure	64,698.68			3,344.34		68,043.02	60,476
Excess of receipts over payments	-2,441.56	500.00	200.71	207.07	286.10	-1,247.68	4,995
<i>Reconciliation of funds</i>							
All assets at 01 Jan 2025	33,670	3,785	0		104.00	3,155.00	40,714
All assets at 31 Dec 2025					311.07		
Change	31,228.44	3,785	500.00	200.71		3,441.10	39,466.32
	-2,441.56	0	500.00	200.71	207.07	286.10	-1,247.68