

Parish Profile
of
St Mary Magdalene
Mitford

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Stable Green
Mitford
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 3PZ

www.mitfordchurch.org

December 2016 (draft)

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Introduction

This parish profile introduces our church family and our aspiration to continue in faithful growth and service to Jesus our Lord.

There are 200 people on the electoral roll. We are predominantly a gathered congregation where 90% live in outlying towns and villages around southeast Northumberland and travel to the parish of Mitford. The church organisation is such that all groups report through and are overseen by the PCC. The PCC has 20 members and meets in alternate months. The Standing Committee meet one month before each PCC meeting. There are a number of sub-committees and working groups

In drafting we have sought input widely: not only from church members, but also other residents of the parish and surrounding Christian neighbours. This has proved to be a valuable opportunity to take stock of our relative strengths and shortcomings, encouraging us to share what we enjoy through God's grace and reinforcing our commitment to our own distinct, gathered community. In particular it reminds us that we can never be complacent in our journey of faith, for as followers of Jesus we remain very much a "work in progress".

Although primarily written for enquiring clergy as we seek a Christ centred minister to lead us forward, we hope it can be of value for anyone considering joining our church family. Should this honest, "warts'n all" introduction to Mitford Church attract you, then please do come and join us- you will be most welcome!

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OUR VISION is to bring all closer to God and to each other, so that His Kingdom is seen through our lives and in the mission of our church. We long to express God's *LOVE*, to *GROW* in faith, to *SERVE* as his disciples and together *GO* out into the community so that others may come to know Jesus.

WE LOVE:

For us the miracle at the heart of the Christian faith is that God sent His Son into our world and revealed a love that knows no bounds. He trusted the Father's love to the end – never giving up on hope and ready to endure everything for those He loved. We are children of a loving Father and in our lives we continue to strive prayerfully to follow his example – towards Him and toward one another.

WE GROW:

Faith in Jesus is the first step in our Christian journey and we strive to welcome unreservedly **all** who seek to know him. In all our worship and fellowship together we gather as God's people to learn more about Him through teaching and preaching the Bible, to worship Father Son and Holy Spirit, to encourage one another to live more wholeheartedly for God and to be a local expression of the world-wide church.

We encourage members to belong to small groups where they can share, pray, learn and experience the love of God through one another. We want individual and corporate prayer to be at the heart of all we do because we can do nothing in our own strength and are totally dependent upon God's sovereign and gracious work amongst us.

WE SERVE:

We see ourselves as disciples of the servant King, a church family that exists to support, equip and enable Christians to worship God in the actions of our daily lives, whether at home, at work or in the community. God has blessed us in so many ways; as we grow in Christ we aim to realise and use these priceless gifts to serve Him, one another and the world he came to redeem. Led by the Spirit we continue to search for practical ways of serving and supporting those in need.

WE GO:

As His Body in the world today, we are inheritors of Jesus' Great Commission, to share the Good News with all. We recognise that this challenges us both as individuals and the church to live and work as disciples of Christ namely – to Love – Grow – Serve and Go through our Sunday and midweek services, through our many and various activities and our involvement in the wider church, community and beyond.

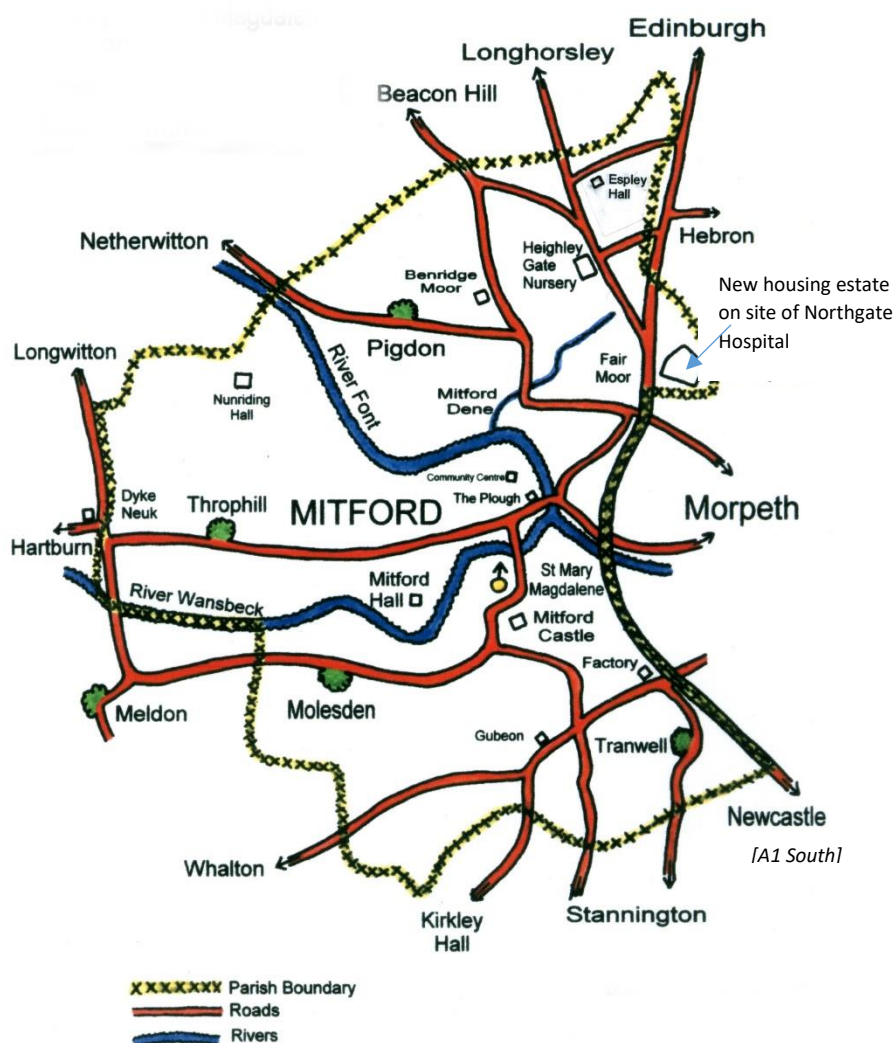
The Parish

The Parish of Mitford is a rural, mainly agricultural area in Northumberland. The village is situated west of the market town of Morpeth, just off the A1, 15 miles north of Newcastle upon Tyne. At the centre of the village is the Plough Inn and the Village Community Centre which provides many opportunities for social interaction and sporting activities. There is a leek club, bowling club and the village has a cricket team.

There are 374 inhabitants listed on the Mitford Parish electoral roll and they are of mixed age and social grouping. There is very low ethnic mix in the area and no significant social or unemployment issues.

A significant new development featuring 225 houses is in the early stages of construction at St Andrews Gardens – former NHS Trust land at Northgate Hospital

The main industry in the area is farming, the Mitford Estate is the main landowner and the other three main local employers are Northgate Hospital, Piramal Pharma Solutions (Pharmaceuticals) and a large Garden Centre. Most people living in the parish commute to Morpeth and Tyneside.



There are good transport links in Morpeth, with regular bus and train services. Newcastle International Airport is 10 miles to the southwest. Apart from school buses there is no regular bus service through Mitford village.

Morpeth is a friendly and characterful market town where people have time to talk to each other in the street. There are major retailers, Marks and Spencer, Boots, W. H. Smith, Morrisons, Lidl, and Next as well as a whole range of smaller family run businesses of every

conceivable kind plus banks and building societies. There are five churches of various denominations in the town. There are also pleasant walks along the river and surrounding area, extensive parks and recreation areas for all ages and many leisure and sports facilities.

There is a three tier education system in the Morpeth area of the following schools:

First schools: –	Abbeyfields, Goose Hill, St Robert's RC Aided, Stobhillgate, and All Saints C of E Aided.
Middle Schools: -	Chantry and Newminster
Community High School: –	The King Edward VI
Community Special School: -	Collingwood School and Media Arts College
Adult Learning: -	Morpeth Adult Learning Centre - The King Edward VI
C of E Academy: -	Northumberland C of E Academy - Josephine Butler Campus Ashington

Northumberland is a lovely and historical county of rolling open countryside, occasionally wooded with some open moorland and frequent views of Simonside and the distant Cheviot Hills on the Scottish border. The coast line is spectacular with long fine sandy beaches.

Newcastle upon Tyne is just 20 minutes away, with extensive shopping and a revitalised Tyne river frontage featuring The Sage Gateshead which is both a live music venue and a centre for music education and the famous Gateshead Millennium Bridge.

Our Worship

Mitford Parish Church is a diverse Christian community, with people of all ages, coming from all walks of life. Worship plays a key role in the life of Mitford Church and we seek to provide forms of worship which sensitively reflects the need and expectations of all those who attend.

Sunday Services

8.30am BCP Holy Communion

This service follows the quiet reflective tradition of The Book of Common Prayer. There is no music, a sermon is included and regular attendance is approximately 10-20.

10.30am Family Worship (Common Worship)

This service aims to meet the needs of all ages and attracts congregations of some 50 adults and 10 children /young adults. These figures are fairly stable at present, yet some reduction in attendance has been noted in recent years. We see this as a reminder that we can never stand still, but always be seeking fresh and appropriate ways to serve in Christ's name. The current monthly pattern for our 10.30 service is:-

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| First Sunday | Holy Communion is a family service. The children go straight to Junior Church and join us later in the service as we celebrate communion. Music is provided by the music group. Clergy will usually robe for this celebration. |
| Second & Fourth Sundays | Service of the Word in which the children may be with us at the beginning of the service but leave after the children's talk for their various groups in Junior Church (in the Stable Room.) Again music is provided by one of the music groups. The service leaders do not robe for this service. |
| Third Sunday | Family Worship Is mainly in the same format as the Second and Fourth Sundays but occasionally [around 6 times a year] we try to take the opportunity to hold this in a more informal "Café Church" setting in the village community centre. This service is often lay-lead and music is provided by the music group. |
| Fifth Sunday | This is often a more informal (alternative) time of worship. It is based on the structure of the Family Service but we often try out something different. |

Prayer Ministry is offered at the end of every 10.30 family service. All music, liturgy and supporting multimedia is available on projection screens and services may be relayed to the nearby Stable Room. Coffee is served after these services in the Stable Room, giving people an opportunity to chat, network and enjoy each other's company.

We are greatly blessed and encouraged by the extent of lay participation through music, reading, intercessions, prayer ministry, teaching and leading in this family worship environment.

Baptism services will normally [but not always] be within the setting of our family worship.

5.00pm Sunday Evening Worship

This is an evening service of quiet reflection where worship is in the tradition of the Book of Common Prayer with a sermon and music provided by the choir and organist. Attendance ranges between 5 to 15. Clergy / Readers will usually robe for this service.

First and Third Sunday	No Service
Second Sunday	BCP Holy Communion
Fourth Sunday	BCP Choral Evensong
Fifth Sunday	Songs of Praise alternating with Hebron

6.00pm First Sunday

On the first Sunday of each month 10-15 of us gather in the evening, at 6.00pm for an act of reflective worship. This service is generally quieter than all the others and provides opportunity for silent prayer, personal searching and an opportunity to delve deeper into God's word than might be possible elsewhere in the week. Biblical exposition and music plays an important part of this service.

Mid-Week Services

A service is held at 10.00 am on the first Tuesday in the month in the Mitford Chapel and we follow the Book of Common Prayer. A sermon is included and regular attendance is approximately 6-7. Clergy robe for this service.

Occasional Services

Over the past year there have been: 6 baptisms, 2 candidates confirmed, 6 weddings and 5 funerals.

Seasonal Services

Services are held on specific days during the Church year i.e.:

Ash Wednesday
Services during Lent and Holy Week
Easter Day
Ascension Day
Harvest Thanksgiving

Service of Hope and Light
Christingle
Lessons and Carol Services
Christmas Eve (Midnight Communion)
Christmas Day

Collaborative Ministry

We embrace the concept of Local Ministry as a partnership between laity and clergy. Our ministry team serves both Mitford and Hebron parishes, comprising of an Associate Minister, four Lay Ministers, one Reader Emeritus and two Readers in Training. Recently several of the team have been supporting less well-resourced parishes nearby, which we have found to be an enriching experience. Church members are encouraged to develop their own individual ministries and further contribute to the wider mission of the church.

Our local ministry seeks to:

- Explore what our church at Mitford is called to be and do
- Help us to choose our priorities
- Promote the mission of the church
- Enable the congregation to develop its faith and discipleship
- Identify and address the needs of the wider community
- Discern and nurture the gifts and ministry of everyone
- Consider support and training needs.

Small Groups.

We encourage church members to engage in house groups and other small gatherings to enjoy and grow in Christian fellowship. These meetings occur in a variety of settings on different days. The range of activities covered during these meetings provide a richness to our 'out of church' worship while allowing us to support each other in a full and powerful way. The groups which range from breakfast prayers to morning and afternoon meetings as well as evening sharing. Currently seven groups meet weekly or fortnightly

We are encouraged that members of other churches are now involved in some of these meetings, allowing more people to become aware of Jesus in their lives and to build strong and supportive relationships. One group, 'Coffee Plus', is for ladies only and is well attended.

Small Groups allow us to:

- Strengthen Relationships.
- Deepen prayer and worship.
- Share and grow in our knowledge of the Gospel and Christian tradition
- Study courses chosen by our Ministry Team e.g. at Lent and Advent.

- Enable and support participation in Mission and Evangelism
- Look after each other in an effective and Christian way.

Group members are regularly involved in sharing and developing their ministry through leading study courses, worship and various other activities e.g. Marriage Preparation, Counselling, Family Support, Lent and Advent preparation, as well as leading services during Holy Week.

Children and Young People

We attach great importance to our church's work with young people, both within the families who come to Mitford and from the wider community. We endeavour to help and support them to grow in their understanding of the Christian life and to experience for themselves what it means to be part of the Christian Family.

The life of our Christian community reflects the central place of children and young people, providing them with opportunities to experience the love of Christ, through the promotion of the Christian faith, spiritual growth and self-development.

Junior Church

Our Junior Church runs alongside the family worship and includes a caring, varied and exciting programme crammed with activities, games, craft, quizzes, drama and stories surrounding Bible teaching. Children are grouped according to school age from toddlers in the crèche to young teenagers. We have a team of experienced and committed teachers many of them with children of their own at the church.

Children also play an active part in the church services by acting out in role plays that underpin the principles included in the sermon, read lessons as a part of Christmas Carol Services and Nativity plays and at similar events in the church calendar.

Youth Ministry

Our Youth Ministry exists to reach all young people with God's Love, to provide a safe place for genuine relationships where young people can encounter God. We recognise the individuality of all young people and encourage them to reach their potential. Young people have a valued input into our Church life and we try to encourage and promote the good that they bring to us as well as be challenged by the freshness and energy that they have.

The Mitford Youth Group, typically 12 members, meets in the Village Community Centre on Sunday evenings during term time when fun, friendship, and opportunities to explore the Bible and see its relevance today, play an important part of our time together. We collaborate in this with the adjoining parish of Morpeth, whose groups cater for High School age children from our church; while our youth group attracts children within the Middle School age range. Children commute from a wide catchment of Northumberland outside the Mitford area. About half of the children regularly attend church within their own parish.

The activities include games, role plays with a biblical theme, crafts including making gifts for events such as Mothering Sunday or a wreath at Christmas. Collecting and packing toys and essential items during Advent for the Shoebox appeal is an annual traditional activity.

The youth group also participate in outdoor activities including evening /night walks around the surrounding countryside finishing with games and a BBQ within the vicarage grounds.

In recent years the youth group has played a part in the annual Christmas Carol Service – one year performing a play to remember the troops in the First World War, another year playing Christmas Carols on hand bells – a new skill developed during the youth group sessions running up to Christmas.

Over recent years the Church Junior Football Team won the local junior football league which is organised through the Newcastle Diocese and run at a Leisure Centre in Cramlington on a Saturday morning during term time. The football team is made up of both children who attend the church and others whose only contact with church life is through the experiences gained in playing with other church teams.



Safeguarding

Mitford PCC is committed to providing the safest possible environment for the children, young people and vulnerable adults in its care.

We have a written Policy on Youth and Junior Church's Work which is reviewed annually. As well as setting out the aims and practical arrangements for each of the various groups working with children and

young people, the policy has detailed provisions for child protection based on the Child Protection Guidelines issued by Newcastle Diocese.

Collaboration in Mission

Whilst caring for the needs of our church family we seek to fulfil our place within the wider Body of Christ through active engagement in joint initiatives. For example youth work is shared with other parishes in the central band of the deanery, we share a joint ministry team with Hebron parish, both Mitford and Morpeth parishes serve together on the governing board of All Saints Church of England First School and a member of our church leads marriage enrichment and marriage preparation courses for a number of local churches and to Ordinands in training at Cranmer College, Durham. Interchurch Lent Courses are a

regular event locally and several Mitford church members attend the weekly interdenominational bible study group held in a local coffee shop. We host a mid-week group in our parish room, called “Coffee Plus”: this lively gathering of ladies drawn from a number of local churches meet for prayer and Bible study.

The PCC sets aside a percentage of its income for charitable support via mission partners at home and abroad. There is excellent contact with the school and children’s home (Children’s Vision International) in Bogota- their leader visits us every year to provide us with first hand updates and share fellowship; also several of our parish have supported them as volunteers in Colombia. Our other overseas partner is a grassroots community project led by a one of our previous church members based in Tibet. Due to their circumstances, contact is less regular, but we still feel called to give ongoing prayer and material support.

Our UK key partners are the local food bank and two organisations who work with refugees and asylum seekers currently residing in Tyneside. For several years we have arranged to host groups of migrant families at our church for a summer afternoon of food, games, music and company. Our guests really appreciate the opportunity to escape the city, some describing it as their “summer holiday”; but it blesses us, challenging our preconceptions as we hear first-hand of the experiences they have been through and they share insights from across faith boundaries.

Mitford church provides food, finance and many volunteers to Wansbeck Valley Food Bank. Our strong links with this church instigated project gives us a means to deepen our unity across denominations in practical demonstration of God’s unconditional love in our neighbourhood.

We also support Mustard Tree Trust, which is a local interchurch venture with school age children.

Pastoral Care

We support our church members and the local community in prayer and action, giving care in all aspects of life.

Pastoral Care covers a variety of roles including:

- Welcoming visitors and new members to the church
- Offering “friendliness” to our congregations at each service to give the feeling of God’s care
- Supporting the sick & bereaved
- Home and hospital visits
- Lifts to appointments or church

- Assistance with shopping
- Keeping an awareness of those church members who might be in need
- Filling in forms and returns
- Writing letters
- Prayer ministry

Hope and Light Services are organised by the Pastoral Care team for the benefit of people suffering from bereavement, grief or loss of any kind. ****PHOTO ****

Afternoon Tea and Coffee Mornings for the more elderly members and friends are very popular: an opportunity to develop friendships and pray together. A monthly Lunch Club and other small groups with shared common interests have been formed eg cycling, crafts, book club, walking.

We use Christmas and Easter as outreach opportunities.

We have established a Marriage Preparation course. Feedback from the course has been excellent. The course has been adopted by other parishes and we work in collaboration with them to assist each other. We also run Marriage Enrichment courses, open to members of the wider community, Christian or non-Christian.

Confidentiality is always given the highest priority and training opportunities provided.

Social Activities

At Mitford most of our various social events occur as part of other group activities. The Charity Support team hold an annual fundraising craft fair and pooled meals to welcome mission partners, while the Pastoral Care team arrange the monthly lunch club, Afternoon Tea and Coffee Morning.



Communications

We recognise the importance of communication.

A news and notices sheet is available online and in church every Sunday. Christmas and Easter cards with a seasonal message and service details are widely distributed to households in the parish.

We intend to make greater use of our revised website <http://www.mitfordchurch.org>

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Buildings and Fabric

Our Church

The church is a beautiful Grade I listed building in a wooded conservation area of the Wansbeck river valley opposite the ruined remains of Mitford Castle. The original Norman church was built in the 12th century, and later destroyed under King John in 1215. The church was rebuilt in the 13th century and survived later fires and partial destruction. In 1874 a massive restoration took place. The present building comprises the early English chancel, extended nave and 19th century spire and baptistery. There are two side chapels, one now the vestry, the other called the Mitford Chapel. A new gallery was added above the font in 2008. The church has what is thought to be the oldest church bell in the country.



Mitford church has disabled access – hearing loop – modern heating and audio/visual systems and the fabric is in excellent state of repair.

The Stable Room

Situated between the church and Vicarage is the “Stable Room” which was completed in 2000 with a grant from the Millenium Commission. This building has disabled access, two unisex toilets (one with disabled facilities and a baby changing unit) and a fully equipped kitchen.

<placemaker for photo of Stable Room>

The hall provides an area for approximately 80 people which can be partitioned into three meeting rooms. A video link allows us to relay church services to the hall. The room has many uses - coffee after worship - Junior church - committee meetings - Youth Groups - Harvest lunches - retreats and public hire for special events.

The building is fully compliant with Health and Safety and Food Hygiene Regulations and has an efficient heating system. We have Internet wi-fi and telephone services within the Stable Room.

Churchyard

There has been a recent change in the way that the Churchyard is maintained. Two years ago the church decided that we should move from the traditional approach of close-cutting the grass to a more Eco-friendly position. In this we now allow the grass in 40% of the churchyard to grow uninterrupted which encourages wildflowers to thrive but also supports a wide range of wildlife. Our young people have built bird boxes, which have been VERY well used and more recently “bug hotels” which will, next year, encourage wildlife still further.

This is an initiative that will take a few years to come to full fruition but there are already changes taking place! It is a very different way of managing a churchyard so we are trying hard to keep people informed and involved.

We are actively involved in managing the gravestones; for their safety and the history they provide. We are working hard to record and share their messages.

. PICTURE HERE?

Vicarage

The Vicarage is a very spacious 4 bedroomed detached family home with large garden and overlooking the ancient ruins of Mitford Castle. Built in 1961 it is of brick construction and the interior is in good decorative order.

Ground floor rooms include a substantial living room with open fireplace; dining room; music room with door to outside; fitted kitchen; a cloak / washroom; utility room and study. Upstairs there are 4 good sized bedrooms and family bathroom.

The central heating is powered by LPG. Broadband Internet access is available.

Externally, the extensive front driveway is used for parking at times of church services. Vehicular access is also available to the rear of the property. There is also a garage; carport and large hard standing area. There are gardens, with lawn, shrubs and perennials to the front and rear of the property.



Finance

During the present financial year there has been no specific giving campaign however a stewardship campaign has been planned for the coming year. The vast majority of giving is gift aided with the tax being duly claimed. In addition, Gift Aid envelopes are made available in the pews for one off and irregular givers. Parish Share [2016 - £58000] has and is paid in full by regular monthly direct debits. The church has some reserves and no there are no major debts.

Expenses are paid to the incumbent to reimburse their expenditure in respect of travel, telephone and internet provision and other incidentals necessary for the post. In addition Council Tax and Water rates are paid on behalf of the incumbent. Hebron PCC contribute a proportion of these expenses.

A copy of our 2015 Financial Accounts can be found in Appendix 3.

The Person we seek is:-

- a Spirit led prayerful leader, a good communicator, compassionate, approachable and a "visible presence" in our community.
- passionate to preach and teach the Bible, building up the Christian lives of those in church and presenting a living faith to those in the wider community.
- a good listener who appreciates the needs and expectations of all ages.
- willing to engage and serve the community, working in collaboration with the ministry team and a variety of people within the parish and beyond.
- an enabler and encourager who will enthuse and energise, growing a younger church whilst nurturing the gifts of all.
- sensitive to broad Anglican tradition, yet able to innovate and demonstrate flexibility and imagination in music and liturgy .

Appendix 1: Mission Action Plan

		Short term	Longer term 2-5 years
Love	Worship	Preparation for Easter	Craft mission activity with new priest in charge Explore new ways of being open and welcoming
Grow	Receive teaching	Recruitment process for Priest in Charge Café Church Lent Course in Parish and shared with other churches / communities Discipleship & Giving Campaign /sermon series Review of needs of Children – Junior Church, Youth groups	Seeking new leaders from own congregation Develop people/ tithing of talents Biannual review of house groups Implement development of children's needs Review opportunities for developing new readers
Serve	Support wider community	Belonging & Friendship events Weddings (7 planned to date for 2017) Refurbishment of Stable Room Reworking Mission Action Plan with wider deanery strategy/ collaboration Collaboration with Morpeth and Hebron - ecumenical / inter church / youth groups/ house groups/ food bank Richard Sanderson presentation in service from Bogota children's centre 2 April 2017 Bishops Event 7-9 September 2017 Quinquennial survey / report West End Refugee activity day September 2017 Deanery Mission weekend event 3- 5 November 2017	Review / give up/ stop activities past their sell by date to free church family for church mission Replenishing / refreshing activities Asset review in line with emerging activities Seek church collaboration with other churches
Go	Operate outside church	Local community engagement via churchyard initiative Marriage preparation courses Marriage enrichment courses - Durham and Morpeth Support / integrate with new housing residents Review revised website Review needs and opportunities for schools	Support emerging needs of housing developments Develop opportunities for schools

Appendix 2: SWOT analysis and consultation process

In order to ensure that this Parish Profile represents the widest possible range of views, the PCC tasked a small team to consult extensively. To do this we presented an evolving draft of the Vision statement shown at the start of the document, then held an open discussion to gather opinions on our relative strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) as a church family. At the end of each discussion we sought input on the characteristics of the candidate we are seeking to lead us forward. During this exercise we visited the house groups, both ecumenical groups and held sessions with both our 0830 and 1030 Sunday congregations. In addition we distributed leaflets to homes in the parish, inviting them to offer their input at an informal session in the local village pub.

Appendix 3: 2015 Financial Accounts

< to be added in final version of document >