



Communities Together Durham



Annual Report 2021

Introduction

What a year of contrasts this has been! Our annual report highlights inspiring stories of generosity, imagination, loving care, perseverance, resilience. The depth and breadth of compassion and kindness in churches, parishes and communities is overwhelming and we are thankful for being able to share in, encourage and support some remarkable activity, from individual acts of kindness to actions to challenge injustice on a regional and national level.

Behind all the positivity is a prevailing anxiety, uncertainty, insecurity, isolation and hardship for many people in our communities. Pre-pandemic, the North East had the highest rate of unemployment of anywhere in the UK in each of the last thirteen years; the joint highest rate of working-age poverty; the UK's lowest weekly earnings for full-time employees; the highest proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals; the highest proportion of children living in families with no or little savings to shield them from economic shocks and the highest rate of destitution, with 1% of all households in the region experiencing destitution at some point in 2019. At the end of 2021 the overall picture will hardly have changed.

The power of communities pulling together to support one another and to challenge injustice has rarely been more needed if everyone in our Diocese and Region is to flourish spiritually, financially, mentally and physically, as part of flourishing communities. There is much to celebrate this year and, of course, more to do.

Thank you too for holding the vision for and with our churches and communities – together we have the power to bring about the change we long to see.

Sheila Bamber and the CTD Board

2021 Highlights

30 churches and projects - responding to poverty, food provision, IT, mental health and isolation.



3 financial inclusion projects

2 IT inclusion projects

1 book group

11 summer holiday clubs supported with small grants

30 events attended by 450

900 hours working alongside churches

50 organisations represented at Covid Cash courses

10 FIC projects

1 Living Wage City

5 mammoth cakes eaten on our staff day



Financial Poverty

Launching Debt Relief projects



In 2021 CTD has supported the development of two CAP Projects in the Diocese and a new debt project in Jarrow.

Darlington CAP project started in 2020 and now employs a part time worker. It has contact with 21 regular clients, and at the end of lockdown was expanding its service to include face to face work. In 2021 CTD provided CAP Darlington with a small grant to increase local publicity of its service.



The project has also helped a client meet some of the cost of car tax and assisted with practical tasks like opening new bank accounts, filling in grant forms (eg a successful application to reduce energy debt by £1000), sorting through financial paperwork, accompanying clients to medical appointments and liaising with schools.

Sunderland CAP opened in June 2021, with a part time debt manager and with the ongoing support of local churches.

“I can sleep nights...this service has transformed my life.” (Client, Sunderland CAP)

Just 6 months in, Sunderland CAP is seeing the maximum number of clients (9 per week). This has included one person who has had £28,000 of debts written off, a move which ‘transformed his life’, from the point of being suicidal. A different client has started going to a local church after receiving debt relief. We would encourage local churches and individuals to support these projects as they provide a vital and professional service.

Jarrow Debt Project - Lord Crewe's Charity has celebrated its Tercentenary during 2021. It continues to support clergy from the Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle and projects for the relief of poverty and of sickness. With their support, Jarrow and Simonside parishes are working with Community Money Advice to train and support money mentors and debt advisers linked to a network of Places of Welcome. The project will also train and support mental health first aiders. A project manager will begin work in January 2022, and the 'Places of Welcome Plus' will be inaugurated on 'Blue Monday', offering hope and support at the darkest time of the year.

Covid Cash Recovery

In partnership with Just Finance Foundation and Together Newcastle, Maddy and Ray delivered free Covid Cash Recovery courses via Zoom, giving access to up to date information on benefits, government schemes to support people during Covid (eg furlough), and budgeting skills.



Almost everyone who attended felt they had learned something that would be helpful to them while working with members of the community. Participants have been able to directly support people in a range of areas such as accessing benefits, managing bills and budgeting.

"The course enables people like me to engage better with the community and feel confident to do so well. Without it I would have struggled to research anything like the same information provided in just these two hours."

Together Newcastle attendee - December 2020

The course has helped strengthen relationships between CTD and other organisations, particularly some statutory groups, members of which attended training. The course was well-regarded and publicised by Durham County Council, highlighting the value of working with others to increase the reach of such schemes.



45

**courses run by
delivery partners**



7,500+

**people in the
North East
estimated to have
benefited from
the course**

"The local info was very useful. This will definitely be a good resource to use alongside my CAP resources for clients I work with."

Together Newcastle attendee - January 2021

Events & Education

Despite the restrictions, CTD hosted 30 events this year. Along with financial awareness (Covid Cash Recovery) these also included a book club, storytelling sessions, networking events, holiday club planning, mental health awareness and reflections on spirituality and justice.

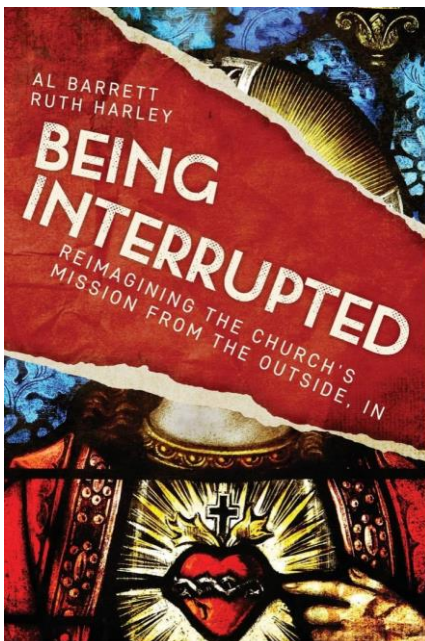
Being Interrupted

Working in Partnership with Joanne Thorns (North East Churches Acting Together) and Karenza Passmore (Religious Resources Centre), we met online for six sessions to discuss the new book by Al Barrett and Ruth Harley: *Being Interrupted*. The book widened the scope of conversations about racism and mission, acknowledging the overlapping nature of the various ways in which our culture divides and excludes people. The book acknowledges the church's complicity in

oppression; not only racism, but classism, misogyny, homophobia, as well as our lack of proper care for creation and exclusion of the voices of children.

“The group reminded me of passions which tend to be suppressed in the busyness of life and ministry, especially how we enable a renewed more radical and more passionate church to be reborn” (Course participant)

The genius of the book was acknowledging the challenges that the church faces when doing outreach, but managing to propose some possible ways for the church to engage in mission that do not reinforce the oppressive ways that this has been done in the past, and makes room for the gifts of the community to flourish. It was great to have Al and Ruth involved in the final session to hear our collective enthusiasm and to help clarify questions that people had.



Tim was grateful to the authors because they demonstrated ways to make the buzz phrase about mission "notice what God is doing and join in" not just a catchy theological idea, but a lived reality. They helped us all to have proper caution for the ways that the church can accidentally be patronising, condescending or arrogant when trying to do outreach in a community. After the success of this course in 2021, we are already looking at ways of engaging with churches in 2022.

“Being Interrupted” has planted within me a desire to see my neighbours more clearly and to love them more dearly” (Course participant)

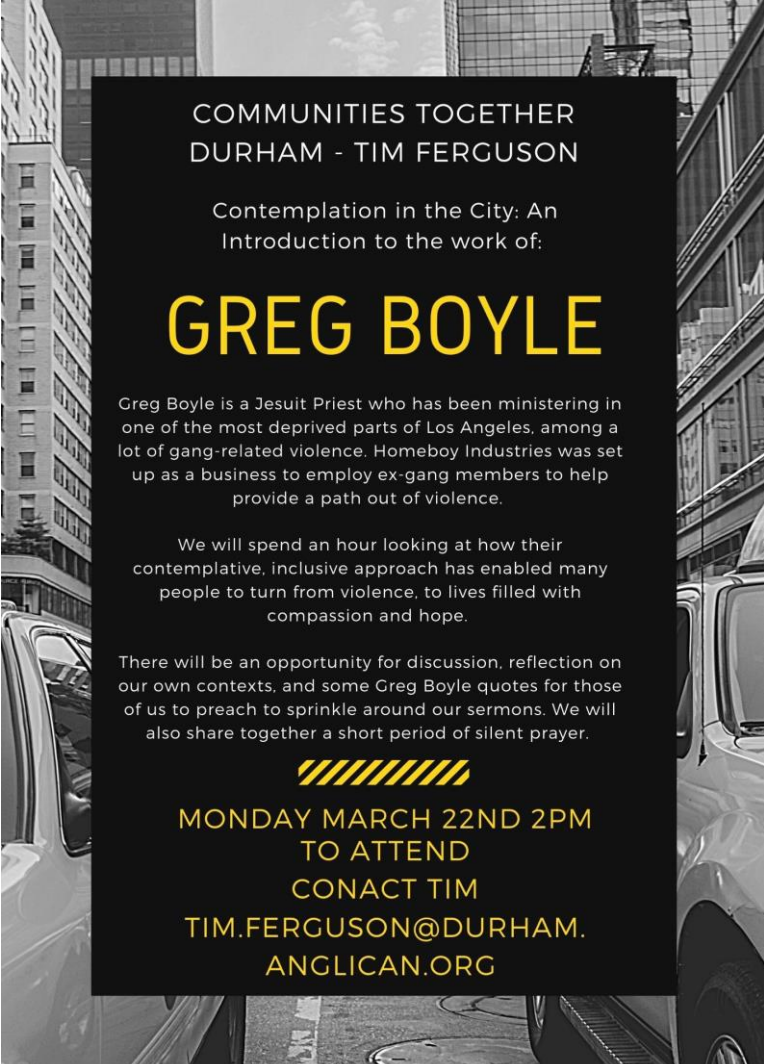
Spirituality & Justice

Prior to his sabbatical on this theme, Tim hosted 3 zoom events on contemplation and justice. Our first speaker was Terry Doyle, who works for the World Community of Christian Meditation, and pre-Covid would regularly host refugees and asylum seekers and others who society marginalises, and take them away on retreats. In the stories he told, he connected the practice of meditation to compassion, and how in the silence, the slow work of God can enable us to do justice and live peacefully, even in the middle of chaos and injustice.

Greg Boyle and Homeboy Industries was the subject of session two. Their work involves assisting gang members in Los Angeles to turn away from violence, learning peaceful, compassionate and wise ways of life. The gang members discover a community of tenderness, their own unshakeable goodness, and their giftedness. The process is bumpy, and learning to work alongside other gang members who used to be enemies presents challenges, but there is a joy and a tenderness in the stories that is unmistakable. The setting might seem remote and alien to Durham Diocese, yet there were some key themes that resonate well with any Christian community trying to do something good in the world.

Our third session was Mother Gemma from St Aidan's in Hartlepool, telling us of her encounters with a God who reminds us of our need to let go of outcomes, and who invites us to be compassionate to people who we may find offensive or challenging to love.

We are planning to host further story sharing events like this on Spirituality and Justice in 2022, as they give space for the development of theological thinking on Mission, Poverty and Justice, hearing from situations that provoke and challenge and encourage local action for social justice to develop.



COMMUNITIES TOGETHER
DURHAM - TIM FERGUSON

Contemplation in the City: An
Introduction to the work of:

GREG BOYLE

Greg Boyle is a Jesuit Priest who has been ministering in one of the most deprived parts of Los Angeles, among a lot of gang-related violence. Homeboy Industries was set up as a business to employ ex-gang members to help provide a path out of violence.

We will spend an hour looking at how their contemplative, inclusive approach has enabled many people to turn from violence, to lives filled with compassion and hope.

There will be an opportunity for discussion, reflection on our own contexts, and some Greg Boyle quotes for those of us to preach to sprinkle around our sermons. We will also share together a short period of silent prayer.

**MONDAY MARCH 22ND 2PM
TO ATTEND
CONTACT TIM
TIM.FERGUSON@DURHAM.
ANGLICAN.ORG**

IT Inclusion

Access to IT equipment has become a basic need, even more so during the pandemic. In 2021 we supported two small projects to help issues of IT inclusion in the Diocese, one for primary school children, the other to add resources to an ESOL class held in one of our churches.



Technology allowed children to access educational resources. Many children now access these resources through computers because they are fun, readily available and allow for independent learning since even young children can navigate technology in a safe way if it is properly configured and managed. ***“The technology bought by the funding has allowed more students to have the same opportunities as their peers.” (Clergy)***

Unexpectedly, a local women’s refuge centre benefitted from the IT provision, an example of how poverty is a complex, interwoven issue; ***“Located close to the school is a woman’s refuge. Since the lockdown has caused an increase in the number of women fleeing domestic violence, children have transferred into the school who were housed in the women’s refuge during the pandemic. This includes some of the pupils who have used the technology bought with the funding. While the needs of this group were not anticipated when we (the church) were first considering this, we are very happy to have provided support to this vulnerable group.” (Clergy)***



Referring to the young people living in the women’s refuge, the headteacher said that due to the generosity of the funding and the work of the church in organising it; ***“we were able to support these families to try and bring about a sense of structure and normality for them at a very traumatic time.”*** So the funding not only supported educational outcomes but helped to give them the dignity of access to a normal part of living in 2021.

IT and Asylum Seekers



St Peter's Church in Stockton on Tees had begun to support over 200 asylum seekers through their community work and ESOL lessons. In March 2021, with the help of CTD, they were able to purchase a small pool of tablets and data packages to add to the support they could offer.

"The tablets are proving invaluable to our ESOL class members, and have transformed their ability to engage and therefore learn English. This in turn reduces their poverty of isolation and engagement, allows them more easily to engage in volunteering, and gives them much greater employability once they eventually get leave to remain, and therefore to work."

(Rev Bill Braviner, St Peters Stockton)



Ray visited the ESOL cafe in October and discovered an enthused group of 30 attendees wanting to learn English; they were welcomed, and supported by the church, and they were guided through a lesson on festivals, including Harvest, Halloween and Bonfire night using a mixture of the IT equipment and handouts with puzzles and word searches. It was wonderful to see how the church had developed such a positive learning place for asylum seekers. ***"The grant for the tablets has enabled us to support a number of asylum seekers with online access needs and also respond to the needs of asylum seekers as we encounter them"*** (Rev Bill Braviner)

Working with Churches

We believe local churches are the heart and soul of their communities and CTD is committed to working with parishes and congregations to develop responses to poverty. We celebrate and highlight the work of three churches in areas of poverty in the diocese.

Spotlight on: St Anne's Bishop Auckland

St Anne's is a resource church in the diocese, and pre-2020 had developed partnership working with the Auckland Project. The parish is 857 out of 12382 most deprived areas, with above average child poverty and a significantly high proportion of lone parents. Its key activity is a very popular baby group, attendance around 40 in pre-Covid times. As a church it set up meal distribution and virtual holiday clubs during Covid-19, all well received. At the beginning of 2021 the church was asking a number of reflective questions about how it should proceed with engaging with its community and responding to issues of poverty.



Working with Maddy, St Anne's has participated in a number of CTD events and activities, including the very popular Covid Cash course. After talking with their local communities and with the help of some funding from CTD they initiated a summer Film Club, and other family work including a school uniform clothes bank. After the positive response to this, St Anne's is energised in how it will engage with local resources and gifts in the community to develop its work into 2022.

'Having CTD there to help and support in the early stages of projects, especially when supporting the most vulnerable in our communities, is useful in getting something off the ground without barriers and this is noticeable to me as someone who works in this area.'
(A Keddilty, St Anne's)

Spotlight on: Christchurch Stockton & Chad's Pantry

Based at St Chad's Church Stockton, Chad's Pantry opens 2 days a week for people in the local community to visit, select and choose suitable food from the pantry, for a nominal price. This includes supermarket and food distribution from Fare Share. After 6 months of opening they now see 31 people each week and around 300 different individuals in a month.

"A young couple visit the pantry most Sunday mornings. They both work full-time in minimum wage jobs and bought a house a couple of years ago. Through the pandemic they have been working reduced hours which they did not budget for when they took out their mortgage. They appreciate being able to access the pantry without explaining why they need help." (Rev Jennie Sharpe, St Chad's)



"This really is an amazing achievement. Thanks for the hard work" – Karen Harley (local resident)

"The pantry is well-used and knowledge of it is spreading through the community through word of mouth. By opening on a Sunday morning as well as a weekday morning we have also been able to support those people that work during the week. It is early days, but we have just started to get enquiries from local residents about volunteer roles." (JS)



The Parish also recognised that there was 'social poverty' in the area. Many people had been unable and unwilling to leave their homes and were now feeling isolated but nervous about re-entering social situations. The drop-in provides a safe place where people can join for as long as they feel comfortable.

"Person A is well-known to us through our work with the Food Bank. She has acute mental health issues and often struggles with her finances. She was encouraged

to come along so she could chat with people that had time to listen and have a hot meal. Within a few weeks of her attending we can see an improvement in her general demeanor and attitude."

Some of the people attending had been active in lots of groups pre-pandemic, lost touch and felt isolated during the lockdown periods, and now they are ready to mix with people again, they have found the groups they had been part of have stopped meeting. They came to the drop-in to meet up and have now included others in their craft plans for Christmas." (JS)

Spotlight on: Wingate and Wheatley Hill

One of the places that Ray has been to regularly, on Zoom and in person, has been the Wingate Coffee morning, one of our Places of Welcome, because, as he says:

“Wingate were not going to let the pandemic stop them from hanging out together!”

“They started a weekly virtual coffee morning, every Tuesday morning, and everyone was welcome, including me. I loved it. It was such a relaxed time, with no agenda, just being together, sharing stories, some current church or community issues, some personal, and nostalgia featured regularly too. We had a weekly joke slot from one of the men, which became something we all looked forward to. I was supposed to be there as a professional worker but, to be honest, it became an important part of my own week as I had to shield for 18 months. That loving place became very special to me, and no doubt many of those who came”.

One of the many good aspects of the community work that our churches and projects do is bring people together. This alleviates isolation through open and accessible places, where people build connection and relationships. These often naturally evolve into interest groups, like gardening and craftwork.

Building on their established connections in the community and relationships built in the previous Holiday Clubs, the congregants at Wingate sourced funding, including from Lord Crewe’s Charity via CTD, to subsidise day trips over the summer holidays, instead of a church - based holiday club. A number of local attractions were visited and much fun was had as families spent time together.



Come to the Park!
Wingate Church Family bus
trip to Preston Park
Tuesday 24th August
10.30am till 3.30pm

Departs Holy Trinity Church 10.30am
Depart for home 3.30pm, estimated time arriving home
around 4.00pm



FIC Projects

Nine charitable organisations across the diocese; the FIC projects, are doing amazing things in their communities including providing hot meals, craft groups, exercise groups, community food stores and healthy takeaways. Participants have been nervous about re-engaging in some of the activities after Covid restrictions but creative and thoughtful adaptations have seen many people returning and some activities are busier than ever! The longevity of these projects means that they can respond to the issues in their communities sensitively and with loving care. This has proved more important than ever in 2021.



A food Supermarket at
Space4 Houghton-le-Spring

Spotlight on: Cafe Together, Easington



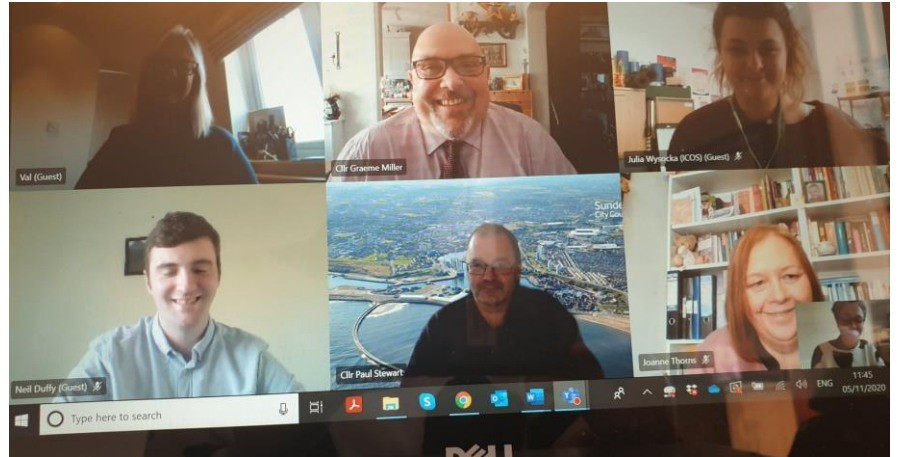
With funding from Lord Crewe's Charity via CTD; Cafe Together Easington, a Methodist/Anglican project, was able to recover its food provision services after the lockdown: **"We are building up slowly, we now have 20 people coming back weekly for sitdown meals in the**

hall but still doing take-aways and deliveries to those who are still not ready to come back. The grant has helped us maintain our trust with the community but also helped people gain confidence by watching how we are coming out of lockdown safely and confidently. We are starting 2 new support groups November and January, helping people find new friends and cope with the loss of family and friends, for families with learning disabilities." (Julie, Project Worker)

As the Cafe re-opened local interest grew: **"A group of men in the village would watch us, after a few weeks one of them came to see what we were doing, he was funny and hungry, some one's son, he left with a bag full of food and ate them going down the street. The next week he brought someone else, they chatted and left eating down the street. The following week we had 5 of the flat members, they were polite to the volunteers and told them that when they ate going down the street it was to stop others taking it off them. They come when they need us but every week they wave and shout as they leave the chemist as I feel that they just want us to know they are still there in the flat."** (Julie)

Campaigning and Social Justice

As part of our work to challenge unjust systems, Val has been working with Citizens Tyne and Wear to reduce in-work poverty by increasing the number of Living Wage employers in the region. This year saw Sunderland Council accrediting, the first local authority in the region. The council plan to make Sunderland a Living Wage City and we are working with them on their action team.



We are also working with Sunderland University gathering testimonies and taking action to highlight the experiences of low paid workers. *(See photo below)*

We continue to see more schools adopting Just Change, ensuring unspent free school dinner money is carried forward. Research is being carried out looking at the impact on young people in schools that do implement Just Change compared with those that don't. This year we have spoken with MP's, local authorities and head teachers forums and are seeing a growing recognition of the injustice of not allowing the poorest young people in our schools to keep all the money they are entitled to for food.



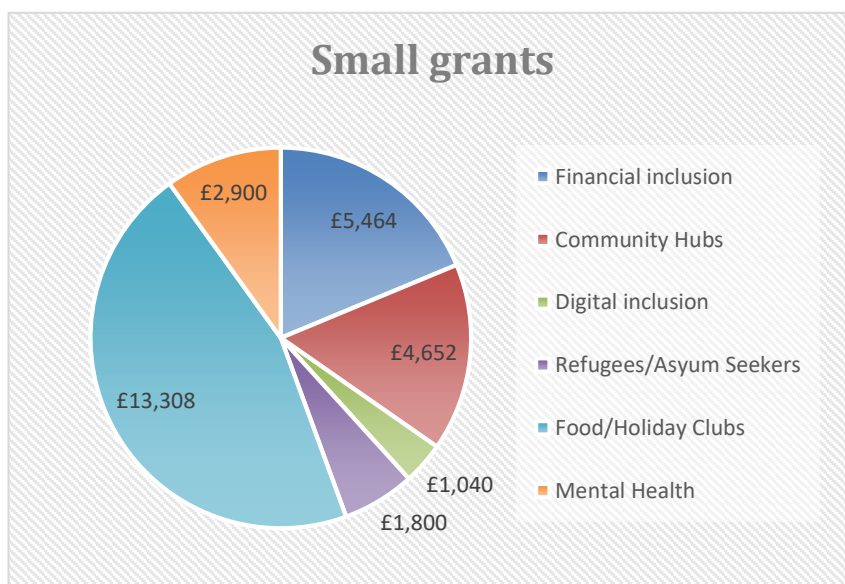
Do contact Citizens Tyne and Wear if you would like to get involved in campaigning in the North East.

Grant giving

Each year CTD, with the generosity of the Lord Crewe's Charity, through the Diocese of Durham, is able to distribute small amounts of funding to support churches and projects it works with. In 2021, £29,164 was distributed to 32 applicants, with an average grant of £883, the highest grant this year being £3,000, the lowest £340.



'The financial support . . . is amazing, CTD are brilliant they just help me do my job!'
(Project leader)



In addition to the examples detailed in this Annual Report, we have supported the following initiatives with a small grant:

- equipment for a community based food initiative
- counselling services for users of a Men's Shed
- a craft group to improve mental health



Food: Holiday Clubs

In the summer, a number of churches around the diocese were able to host a variety of summer holiday clubs that included serving food for the families that attended. We saw a range of holiday provision this year; including bus trips, film clubs, one-off fun days and also whole week activities, with all churches making provisions within the Covid-19 guidelines, being creative to ensure that families in their local community could access fun, safe and positive healthy activities,



One of the Summer Club leaders shared this story about T who attended a holiday club:

'T is 7 years old and has severe autism. He cannot live with his mother, although she now has another baby. He lives with his grandmother who brought him to each session because she needed the contact more than him. He was helped with eating which supported her as he is often difficult about food. He felt very special being involved in the breakfast provision and was encouraged to make good choices and support his own eating. This has helped him grow in social and physical ways and made some of the tendencies of his disability more manageable. Grandma brought him throughout the day also which gave the opportunity for us to host visits with mum and the new baby. The time spent with us gave grandma the chance to find she could belong there and so she is now a regular visitor to us and our café to help combat her sense of tiredness and isolation when T is in school. She is growing and developing confidence in this and we get regular artwork and small home-made gifts that T and grandma make together for us'. (Church Leader)

For a large number of families, the benefit of the holiday clubs was the social engagement after long periods of isolation:

‘This place is great, I look forward to coming here when he’s back at school for a bit of me time’ (Parent)

“This is a good idea. I’m tired of sitting in my own but I don’t like to go anywhere busy.” (Parent)



‘I loved choosing Nutella on my toast!’ (Child, aged 7)



‘This has been great and the kids love coming in.’ (Churchleader)

The activities in one church gave the opportunity for supportive conversations to begin: ***‘Children shared about parents being in prison, and other significant anxieties. I am going to approach the Head Teacher regarding having the use of the annexe in school for an after-school club and will definitely make a plan for a Christmas treat for the same children.’ (Church Leader)***

‘Thank you so much for the funding to make this all possible’ (Holiday Club leader)

This year through the support of Lord Crewe’s Charity we distributed £8,590 to holiday clubs, as part of nearly £14,000 granted to projects that alleviate poverty through direct food provision. The impact that holiday clubs have had this year has been significant and it is encouraging to see how churches have responded and taken initiative.



Rural Poverty

This year CTD worked in partnership with churches and organisations in more rural areas of the diocese to prepare the ground for a scheme to support mental health. With input from community organisations, churches and NHS staff, plans are in place to employ a mental health Parish Nurse in both Teesdale and Weardale.



Extensive conversation and community consultation highlighted issues of poor mental health and lack of access to services in these areas, and research into the Parish Nursing UK model was introduced to the planning group, who are now taking this project forward. Once funding is secured, the aim is to begin

UTASS

recruitment for 2 part time nurses and a supporting admin/fundraising role. It is hoped that this project will run for a minimum of 5 years, building relationships within the two areas with input and leadership from local

people and organisations, and improving access to consistent, longer-term mental health support for people living in these more remote parts of the diocese.



Maddy has also been involved in wider conversations about ministry in rural areas. We have seen the passion in the region for addressing issues like isolation and poverty, which are generally less obvious in rural communities, and accordingly receive less support than some of the inner-city areas. Conversations with clergy and lay people across the North have given rise to the idea of a conference to help inspire, support and bring shared ideas to rural ministry, and we have been involved in the planning of **‘Small, Faithful, Rural’ which will now take place on 10th-11th June 2022**. A group has been drawn together from across the North to help create a strong and unified voice for those working in rural areas, to challenge wider perceptions of the rural context which are often based on more affluent southern areas. We look forward to continuing to be part of these conversations, representing rural parts of Durham Diocese, and bringing the perspective of churches involved in social action in these places to those in positions of authority.

Acknowledgements

Communities Together Durham began as a joint venture between the Diocese of Durham and the Church Urban Fund. During 2021 members agreed changes to the Company structure, and CTD became an associate member of the national CUF Together Network, whilst retaining a strong connection with the Diocese.

We work with a number of projects and partners, including:

The Bridge Project, to encourage and support churches to tackle poverty in their local communities. The Bridge Project is an initiative of the Diocese of Durham, wholly funded by a generous grant from Lord Crewe's Charity and delivered for the Diocese by CTD. The project distributed £29,164 of small contributions towards the relief of poverty and sickness by parishes and community projects during 2021.

Faith in Community (FIC), which is an ecumenical partnership working with local groups to develop and support a network of community projects in areas of social and economic disadvantage. There are currently 10 projects in the FIC network.

Tyne and Wear Citizens, as one of over 20 diverse member organisations, including schools and other faith communities. We act together with power, for social justice and the common good. In addition to successful action around the Living Wage and Free School Meals provision, Tyne and Wear Citizens has campaigned around issues including mental health, school based counselling and hate crime.

During the year we have also worked with Parish Nursing Ministries UK, the Just Finance Foundation, Together Newcastle, the North East Religious Learning Resources Centre, Community Money Advice and others.

CTD also supports parishes to identify gifts and develop responses to local need. We deliver training, facilitate networks including Places of Welcome, participate in research and advocate on a wide variety of issues.

Thank you to all our partners and funders for your generous support during 2021.

This report and all that we do would not be possible without our team of development workers. Thanks to James Ballantyne (who collated this report) and team members Val Barron, Ray Leonard, Tim Ferguson and Maddy Fisher for supporting, encouraging and challenging parishes and projects, reflecting, praying and volunteering in many other ways, and for gathering these and so many other inspiring stories.

Keep up to date with all our work, and contact us via
www.communitiestogetherdurham.org.uk