

## Annual meeting: Vicar's report for the year 2019

2019 was a 'gap year' for St Columba's following the departure of the previous incumbent at the end of 2018. The church community pulled together, led with great commitment by Marjorie Fairbairn and Bill Lomas, churchwardens, and day to day life continued without any notable loss of quantity or quality of activity. For most of the year, there was no Vicar, but I was on loan to St Columba's for support, alongside Revd Bill Miller, Revd John Clasper, and Revd Christine Crompton. I am most grateful to them for their support and encouragement. Sadly, we lost Revd John Clasper very unexpectedly near the end of May. His funeral, at St Nicholas' Cathedral on 10 June, was extremely well attended with excellent representation from St Columba's. I was licensed to the team and this church by Bishop Christine on 25 November 2019.

Ecumenical Lent Lunches on Exploring Forgiveness were well attended. Parish wide Lent study groups 'Building Bridges' helped us to contribute to the development of ten themes or priority areas for the Parish as a whole. These are: New Housing; Health and Wellbeing; Young People; Mission / Building Bridges; Communications; Prayer; Discipleship; Ministry; Evangelism; Team synergy. We hosted a parish wide afternoon to develop our thinking on these areas at Pentecost.

The Pastoral team have continued their ministry of visiting local sheltered housing (Parkside Court, Weetslade Court), extra care housing (Weetslade Court) and residential homes (Woodlands Park – which closed towards the end of the year) as well as a number of individuals in their homes to distribute communion. Weetslade Court ecumenical services have continued monthly. The quarterly services in church for home communicants and others have continued, and are attracting a wider group who find morning services difficult. Open Door has continued throughout the year providing thought provoking worship, food and company for many otherwise isolated people from the community.

During 2019 we refreshed and maintained our links with Greenfields Community Primary School. Bill Miller and I undertook assemblies. Following some input from us, students provided an exhibition on St Cuthbert, Vikings and the Lindisfarne Gospels which was displayed over a month in the summer. The school held its annual Carol Service at St Columba's in December.

We celebrated St Columba's Day in June with a trip to Holy Island which went well despite poor weather. 34 people (of 35 signed up) came – and included a range of friends and family as well as Julie a teacher from Greenfields School, with two friends. We had an excellent talk by Revd Canon Kate Tristram, followed by a Eucharist for St Columba.

In July the Summer Fair took place on what was sadly rather a wet and miserable day. Despite this, the well-oiled organisation and the commitment of every individual member of the church really showed, with a fantastic total raised of over £1500. The Christmas Fair was similarly very successful, raising over £1200. These events, and the regular coffee morning drop ins are very important to us in raising funds to maintain the life of the church. I am very grateful for all the effort that goes into them.

We hosted the Team confirmation and Patronal on 24 November with Bishop John Packer. At the end of the year (on 29 December) we shared in a service at Northern Rugby Club with St Aidan's to celebrate 75 years since we planted them. Our shared history was celebrated.

Our links with the North East United in Christ Fellowship have been consolidated during the year. They welcomed many of us at an Advent/Christmas service, and they were pleased to welcome Bishop Mark to preach at their service at the end of November.