

In January 2021 we were back in Lockdown, but still permitted to worship in church. The decision making was devolved to us at local level. Life is much simpler when someone else, with all the data to hand, makes the decisions! However we continued throughout 2021 with services, reminding people of current rules at each stage. The Bishop had asked me to be acting Team Rector from January 2021 whilst recruitment for a new Team Rector took place (Gerard was licensed in September). Hence the 8am service took place once a month until Advent, to enable me to be more flexible. We recommenced the server team from the beginning of September. Together with the introduction of some singing this brought us closer to a new normal. We have continued to offer our services on Facebook and YouTube.

Our Parish Lent course delivered on Zoom attracted around 18-20 people and focused on the Beatitudes with an eye to the pandemic. Revd David Emmott preached for us during Holy Week and Easter. We celebrated our Patronal Festival with two events – a special service in the evening on Wednesday 9th June with Revd Dr Sarah Moon, a member of the Iona Community, preaching, and a display and activities about Columba on Saturday 12th June, along with cake to celebrate his 1500th birthday! Bill Lomas and I completed confirmation preparation with Daniel and Nathan, and they were confirmed by Bishop Stephen Platten at St Columba's on 21st November, when the parish celebrated Christ the King. Daniel was appointed as our Eco Ambassador at our AGM, and during the year enabled us to develop an Eco Policy.

We worked with Woodlands Park Community Centre and Daverson Hall in January 2021 on a bid to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Local Connections Fund. Recognising that one of the biggest challenges facing our communities as we continue to live with COVID-19 is that of loneliness and isolation, we proposed, working together, to reach out to people, building on our existing work. Wideopen Wellbeing was awarded £2,370 for this, used on tablets, flyers and outside seating and planters. We hope to continue to bid for monies together to promote wellbeing in this community.

Our Summer Fair, with Pedro the pony, was well attended, on a glorious day. In September and October thanks to Bill Lomas we held a series of very successful Musical Evenings, including one with singers from North Gosforth Academy and another with our new Team Rector on marimba which encouraged people back into church and raised much needed funds. Gradually over the autumn we received more hall bookings which has helped. Links with Greenfields CPS were greatly enhanced by our activities around COP26 and the environment, and by a series of visits to church. Though COVID prevented their return to church for carols, I was invited to lead an outdoor carol service at school.

As ever I'd like to end with my thanks to everyone who has served on the DCC during the past year, which has been scarcely less challenging than the year before, and most particular and heartfelt thanks to the wardens who have gone above and beyond what might be required, in the interests of this church and all of you, and have continued to be an enormous support to me. Thank you!

Every blessing

Pauline