

ST COLUMBA, CROSSPOOL

A Review of a Year in the Life of Our Church



Reports for the Annual Parish Church Meeting
15th April 2018

VICAR'S REPORT

I arrived at St. Columba on the evening of the 15th March and enjoyed a warm, supportive, celebratory welcome from the congregation of St. Columba, but also people from Stephen Hill, St. Luke's Lodge Moor, the wider Crosspool community, and friends and family. I have continued to feel this warmth from St. Columba folk throughout the remaining year of 2017, and I believe it is this support and willingness to try new things which has enabled so many things to have happened in these nine months, with many highlights, and as happens in life interspersed with sad events.

Firstly, a number of valued members of the St. Columba community left us this year to start a new chapter in their lives. Diane Ryan, our children's and families missioner left us to become curate of Great Snaith Benefice, while Geoff and Penny Simms moved to be nearer their family in West Yorkshire. They are greatly missed. Also, sadly this year Sandra Ellis died after suffering from cancer. Her funeral was a fitting celebration of her wonderful life, and the fact that over 300 people came is testament to how much she was loved, not only at St. Columba but also in the wider community.

There have been many highlights this year including a fantastic church weekend at the stunning location of Willersley Castle, in Matlock, where we relaxed with great food and company, enjoyed Adrian Scott's thought provoking sessions on Film & Spirituality and had a real sense of being a Church family, with all ages represented. We have also been busy raising money for our church windows, which included a memorable evening of listening and dancing to rock classics from 'The Blueprints,' led by our very own alto saxophone maestro Michael Nelson. Other fund raising events have included the selling of tea towels, cakes and cards, and a far too ambitious bike ride of 80 Km in the Peak District, which took 11 hours, from somebody who should know better and shall remain nameless. This has been supplemented by generous grant donations from the Sheffield Diocese, the Burgesses, Sheffield Town Trust and Churches Together.

We have welcomed a number of new church members through baptism this year including: Clara and Sophia Turner; Thomas and Joseph Hicken; Poppy and Max Remington; Isobel Dyer; and Avary Mae North. Each service has been a fantastic celebration for us as a church. However sadly one of our baptised children Clara tragically died of Septicaemia, but she is still very much treasured and part of our church family, especially the members of stepping stones, and will always be remembered for her wonderful smile and adventurous nature. We also welcomed our new Children and Families Missioner Tara Osborne, her mum Rosie, and daughters Helin and Tiana. Tara has brought us energy, enthusiasm, bags of creativity and a tangible sense of a love of God which has been infectious.

During these first 9 months we have prioritised a number of areas of church life including the development of:

- our partnership, particularly with Stephen Hill but also St. Luke's Lodgemoor.
- our children's and young families work.
- a new service called SacREd Space.
- a new IT system which will enable us to centralise data, make it more secure, and enable greater lay participation.
- lay teams.

The individual reports will show that significant progress has been made in all these areas and we have much to be thankful for. I believe it has been down to God's grace and also a generosity of spirit which pervades many aspects of life within the community of St. Columba. One of the things I have been most impressed by is that the right people are in the right job and that there is always a great deal of attention to detail, which ensures that ministries are always done well and with great skill and care. For this I am very grateful.

Although there are too many people to thank – I hope you all know who you are – I would like to say a few 'thankyous'. Firstly, to Revd Linda Furbey, who has stepped down as Assistant Minister in September and has over the years taken a lead role in the pastoral care within the community and the leading of services in particular. Although she has officially stepped down from her role as Assistant Minister she is, fortunately for us, still involved in the lunch club, pastoral care and the leading and planning of services. I would also like to thank Steve Ellis, our reader, who has been an inspiration to many of us, with his faithful care of his wife Sandra, and who is a great source of common sense and wisdom to me. Also a big thank you to our wonderful Church Wardens – Richard & Brenda, our caretakers Wendy & Arthur who keep the building spick and span, Eddie and Jackie who keep the whole show afloat, and Michelle our administrator who is the oil that enables so many things run smoothly. We also have our very own resident angels (GW and FB) who quietly encourage and care for folk, and show us in a very tangible way what it is to be incarnational and Christ to those around us.

Finally, I have to mention the impact on me, this year, of those families who have lost loved ones, often in tragic circumstances. The dignity, courage, and generosity of spirit they have displayed in dealing with their loss has been truly inspiring and transformational for me, making me realise the fragility of our lives and what is really significant - our relationship with God and one another. It has helped me realise the importance of valuing each day as precious and to live it to the full, and not get too stressed by what are often quite inconsequential things. To them I am extremely thankful and aware of what I thought was irony, that rather than me ministering to them they have, in their vulnerability, let Christ's light shine through them unknowingly and ministered to me; I now realise that this isn't irony but is in fact the heart of the gospel.

Revd. Iain Lothian

WARDEN'S REPORT

This year has been a time of great changes as St Columba's as we moved out of the interregnum and into a new era.

We welcomed Iain Lothian, our new Priest in Charge, in March 2017 and from then we have made significant progress with our partnership with Stephen Hill Methodist Church. When Iain joined St Columba's the diocese made the partnership an important part of his remit and as such this has been one of his prime objectives. In addition to the partnership work Iain has overseen a major upgrade of the computer systems in the office, established a new leader for the Pastoral work Briony Broome, organised grants for the new windows, done a cycle ride to raise funds etc.....as well as running the routine church services and conducting funerals, weddings and baptisms.

Diane Ryan, our trainee vicar and Children and Family worker, left us around the same time to take up her first post as a curate in East Yorkshire.

We appointed Tara Osborne during September as Children and Family Worker. Tara has soon become an important part of the team and has worked tirelessly building up the mission to children. Stepping Stones, Messy Church, Blast Kids are all up and running and steadily growing.

Linda Furby, our assistant priest, decided later in the year that the time was right for her to retire from her official post. The difference is subtle and probably many will not have realized that a change has taken place as Linda continues to work with Lunch Club every Tuesday, helps with the Pastoral work, takes services to assist Iain, deals with the Food Bank etc.

We have also been blessed by the presence of Steve Ellis, Reader, who has been able to work with Iain and with his wealth of experience of the two churches provide a useful insight into the growing together of St Columba's and Stephen Hill Methodist. Steve has also contributed in many other ways but especially the taking of services which the congregation truly appreciate.

We also wish to extend our thanks to Eddie Sherwood, Treasurer, for all the untold hours of work producing Accounts and Budgets etc. We do seem to be making some steady progress on increasing our giving and reducing our expenditure and thereby reducing our reliance on the Legacy Fund.

Thanks also to George Wild, Deputy Warden. Jacky Hodgson, Gift Aid Secretary. Dora Deane, PCC Secretary. Bill Hornby, Mission and Outreach. Pauline Hornby and Gill Wright, Lunch Club. Everyone else who helps in any way...servers, coffee makers, chair stackers, cleaners, cooks, sanctuary helpers, bus drivers, social organizers etc.

I really did not want this to turn into a Mutual Admiration Society Report but alas it has, well it's just what we wanted to say.

Brenda and Richard.

PCC REPORT

Since Iain's commencement in post, the PCC has very much enjoyed working with him, and welcoming his new ideas for the future of St Columba.

Following Diane's departure last summer, the PCC recruited a new Children and Families Missioner, Tara, who started in post in September. Tara has been a very welcome addition to the PCC and the church team.

Our priorities over the last year have been to develop our partnership with Stephen Hill, the most obvious evidence of this, is our shared newsletter and an increase of shared services.

We have also had the majority of our windows double glazed and are continuing to raise funds to pay for these through a number of events.

Dora Deane

TREASURER

2017 was year two of the PCC's five year plan to balance our expenditure with our income. For several years now, we have been spending more on day to day expenditure than we have been receiving from our day to day income. As a result, we have been meeting this deficit each year by drawing down the money that has been bequeathed to us from legacies. In 2017 we used £62,000 and in 2018 we plan to use a further £35,500. At the end of the five year plan, the amount held in our legacy investments will not be sufficient to fund anything of significance or on a recurrent basis.

Overall, in 2017, we made some progress with our five year plan. We were able to increase our income in a few areas. We successfully began a fundraising appeal, and there was a small reduction in our day to day expenditure.

Income.....signs of some growth.

It is heartening to report that we have made progress in halting the yearly decline in our income. In 2017 we actually saw increases in our planned giving, cash collections, and income tax recovery and from the hire of the hall.

We also had a successful fundraising campaign, raising nearly £11,600 towards the costs of the windows project. However other sources of income continued to drop.

Source of income	Compared to 2016	comments
Planned giving, cash collections and tax recoverable income	Up by £2,544	This compares to a drop of £1,420 in 2016. However, We have some significant givers who are no longer with us and this will have an adverse impact in 2018.
Church Hall Lettings	Up by £815.	We have lost income from two regular hall users and this will impact on 2018.
Income from investments	Down by £2,259	This will continue to reduce as we reduce our investments.
Fees from funerals, weddings etc.	Down by £1,134	This is largely beyond our control
Fundraising	Up by £11,599	We still need to raise around £8000 for the windows.
Total Income	Up by £11,042	As a result of our fundraising. There was a drop of £4,700 in 2016, and £9,500 in 2015.

In November 2017 we held our annual stewardship campaign with a target to raise an additional £2,600 in 2018 which is around £1 per week more from our regular givers. As a result of this campaign our forecast of planned giving in 2018 is £53,652 which is £864 more than actually promised during 2017, and £850 more than actually received in 2017.

Expenditure.....like for like expenditure continues to reduce gradually.

Our total expenditure in 2017 was £160,025. This compares with an expenditure of £132,328 in 2016. This amounts to an increase of £27,697. In 2017 we incurred significant and planned expenditure with the windows project. When we remove this cost, we can see our expenditure trend continues to be downwards.

Source of expenditure	Compared to 2016	comments
Windows project	£40,543 more	We will spend around £350 in 2018
Parish Share	£13,648 less	We will give an additional £1,646 in 2018.
Gas, electric, water	£1,391 less	Likely to spend more in 2018 on gas(winter)
flat	£850 more	Repairs & decorating
Printing, postage, stationary, Telephones, Wifi	£1,354 less	Savings on our telephone contract and general spending in these areas.
Equipment, repairs & maintenance	£3,763 more	IT system upgrade, and new fire doors.
Total Like for Like (excl windows & parish share)	£1,367 less	This is a 2.4% saving on 2016.

Balance between income and expenditure..... *very slowly, getting better.*

1. In 2017 the costs of the windows project were £41,433 and we raised £11,599 from fundraising. £8,000 was from grants, £800 from individual donations, £1,011 from sponsored bike ride, £1002 from the jazz concert , £446 from tea towels and £340 from other activities.
2. In 2017 we transferred £62,000 (£49,000 in 2016) from our legacy investments into our bank account. This was to pay for agreed expenditure, largely the windows project and to provide for sufficient cash flow (so we don't go overdrawn!) The full details of how we have spent £62,000 of our legacy investments are detailed in the separate Statement of Financial Accounts.
3. We spent £47,626 more than our income in 2017. This compares to £30,971 in 2016.

Investments.....*going down.*

1. We have the following investments, totalling £400,029.
 - a. Money invested with the Church of England Funds totalling £41,454.
 - b. A flat at Moorbank Rd, as part of the Margaret Yates' Legacy and valued at £160,000. It provided us with a net income of £3,818 in 2017 compared to £4,700 in 2016.
 - c. Shares and cash managed on our behalf by Finn and Co, Stockbrokers. This was also from Margaret Yates' legacy. At 31/12/17 this was valued at £198,575 compared to £243,031 in 2016. This is a reduction of £44,456 and compares to a reduction of £47.683 in the previous year.

Our overall Balance in 2017

1. When we take account of accountancy items such as cash in bank, realised and unrealised share losses and gains, creditors and debtors at the year-end; the final balance amount being carried forward into 2017 was £445,172. This compares to the carry forward into 2016 figure of £484,539, and £523,800 in 2015.
2. This means an overall decrease in all our funds of £39,367.

Eddie Sherwood

ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT

Over the twelve months since the last APCM, the addition of new members has balanced those removed from the roll, such that it now stands at 113 compared to 112 last year.

Peter Brown

FINANCE AND FABRIC COMMITTEE

The Finance & Fabric Committee is responsible to the Parochial Church Council (PCC) for the generation, stewardship and management of a revenue budget, the use of the capital investment funds, and for the flat at Moorbank Road which the PCC owns.

The Committee met on five occasions during the year and, in addition to receiving reports from the Treasurer, the members also received reports from the Gift Aid Secretary. The other matters considered by the committee during the year included the planning of the annual stewardship giving review, the review of remuneration and expenses payments, and the management of our legacy investments. This included consideration of the written reports received and a meeting with Mr Alan Fleming from J M Finn and Co, our financial advisor who oversees our portfolio of shares (the Margaret Yates Legacy).

The meetings also considered a variety of issues relating to the fabric of the building.

The main works carried out this year was the installation of new aluminium double glazed windows to the church and hall.

Eddie Sherwood

SANCTUARY

In preparation for the services of the church, much work has to be done. The communion vessels are cleaned and polished, the linen washed and ironed, the candles trimmed, the brass and silver cleaned and polished. Occasionally, vessels have to be taken away for repair and materials have to be mended. This work is currently done mostly by the servers. We are grateful for the work that Geoff and Penny did and we miss them now that they have moved away from the parish.

Servers play a useful role in the services of Holy Communion which take place here on the first, second and fifth Sundays in each month and on every Tuesday morning. The servers are Jan Rose, John Norman and Peter Brown. Steve Ellis and Bill Hornby continue to act as eucharistic ministers, assisting with the chalice.

Many church jobs, once taken on, can seem to be a long-term commitment. Those who help in the sanctuary are pleased to do the work, for it is a privilege to serve in worship. Nevertheless, new blood would be most welcome.

John Norman

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Social Committee throughout the year have catered for special services, Harvest and Christmas services. They are currently seeking someone to take on the lead for this committee.

Janet Rose

MISSION AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

During the past year our support for overseas mission partners in South East Asia and East Africa largely continued to follow the pattern of previous years based mainly on financial donations, prayer and regular e-mail contacts. Jason's work as a personnel manager seconded from CMS (Church Mission Society) to OMF (Overseas Mission Fellowship) involves helping to support some 460 mission workers in a variety of Asian countries and in many ways. Tracy, in addition to taking prime responsibility for looking after their children, Ruby and Libby, does voluntary work in a school and has been involved with a group doing prayer walks in Chiang Mai's red light district. Sadly, she suffers from attacks of migraine, which have affected her considerably at times during the year. CMS have informed us that the recent fall in value of sterling relative to the Thai baht has affected Jason and Tracy very considerably. If anyone would like to give to help support them they can do so online via churchmissionsociety.org/day or have a word with me about this.

Our links with our current Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) partners in East Africa, Geoff and Celia Linkleter, began in 2015 following a long partnership with Ian Sinkinson. Geoff is a maintenance engineer at Kajjansi, near Kampala in Uganda while Celia helps out in the MAF Office and the school that their daughter, Mim, attends. Geoff's work is crucial in maintaining MAF flights in Uganda and South Sudan which enable partner organisations such as UNICEF and Samaritan's Purse to provide economic, education and health facilities to refugee camps and other needy areas in those regions.

During 2017, David and Helen Smithers, whom we had been supporting in their work with Interserve seeking to bring Muslims and Christians in Birmingham closer together, have moved to Pakistan with their young son. They are now working with SIM (Serving in Mission) as their funding organisation and we have continued to support them in this period, despite communication difficulties at times. Their current intention is to return to England in due

course to continue their work here, hopefully aided by their improved language skills and better understanding of Muslim society following their time in Pakistan. We look forward to hearing more from them concerning this and deciding how it will affect our partnership.

Closer to home our link with St Cuthbert's Fir Vale Food Bank continues with a regular system of collections throughout the year for the Food Bank and a special harvest collection. Many thanks to Rob and Linda Furbey for their work in maintaining this link and to all those making regular donations of food etc. It is hoped that this link can be strengthened in the coming year.

As in previous years, the committee has made recommendations to PCC concerning the annual distribution of grants from church income given to local, national and international charities that we support. Details of charities helped in this way in 2017 are given in the list at the end of these notes. In addition, various other charitable donations were made during the year in response to specific appeals such as Christian Aid Week, the DEC East Africa Famine Appeal and the harvest collection for the Archer Project. Finally, collections at particular baptism, funeral and other special services have been donated to nominated charities such as St. Luke's Hospice, the British Legion, the Children's Hospital, and the Alzheimer's Society. Thanks to all those involved in organising and making donations in so many different ways.

Bill Hornby

DONATIONS TO CHARITIES FROM ST. COLUMBA'S CHURCH

Christian Aid	£1000
Church Mission Society (for Mission Partners)	£1500
Mission Aviation Fellowship (for Mission Partners)	£1000
SIM	£600
The Bible Society	£400
Church Pastoral Aid Society	£300
Sheffield Churches Council for Community Care	£600
Sheffield Cathedral Archer Project	£100
St. Cuthbert's PCC Food Bank	£100
Church Army	£400
Sheffield Schools Christian Worker Trust	£200
Tear Fund	£200
Practical Action	£450
Assist	£400
Sheffield Down Syndrome Support Group	£150
Alzheimer's Society	£200
Care in Crosspool	£100
Sheffield Central Deaf Club	£100
St. Luke's Hospice	£200
Family Action	£100
Open Doors	£300
Montgomery Arts and Christian Centre	£300
Taste	£100
Bible Reading Fellowship (for Messy Church)	£100

St. Andrew's Child Contact Centre	£200
Save the Children (Rohingya Appeal)	£300
Spectrum Theatre	£100
Freedom from Torture	£200
Art Refuge UK	£100
Mary's Meals	£200
Total	£10,000

PASTORAL TEAM

The Pastoral Team: Linda Furbey, Richard and Liz Wales and Sue Sherwood and George Wild form the team. Briony Broome joined in July.

Our aim is to enable the older members of the church, and wider community, to receive spiritual support and fellowship and to seek ways to help them to be active members of the Church family if desired.

Over the past year we have

- Visited the housebound and infirm members of the church and given Home Communion on a monthly basis
- Complemented the pastoral support provided by the Home Groups
- Liaised with Care in Crosspool and other agencies when appropriate.
- Worked with Pauline Hornby and the Luncheon Club team to give pastoral support to the club members
- Encouraged the church family to inform us when pastoral needs arise so we can provide support
- Informed the Hospital Chaplains of those who are in hospital for any length of time to enable Spiritual Support
- Visited residents at Cairn Home to provide spiritual support such as home communion and bereavement support. Steve Ellis is now conducting a regular Communion service with the residents
- Provided transport and support for those who come to the Tuesday Communion service at St Columba's
- Started to develop a plan for a regular bereavement support group to be held at St Columba's
- Begun to look at new ways in which we can co-ordinate our pastoral support

This past year has been challenging due to increased commitments elsewhere in the life of the church but we have endeavoured to continue supporting those in need.

Briony Broome

HOME GROUPS

There are currently four house groups, which have met regularly during the past year. Three of these are monthly on Wednesday evenings and the other meets on a Thursday afternoon in

the church lounge. About 45 people attend the House Groups and the average attendance in each group is 11 members. For some members this is their main link to St Columba's Church.

The groups play an essential role in the pastoral care of members and near neighbours, and providing a place where people can grapple with the Bible in a small group setting. Consequently they are a very important part of fulfilling, our desire to 'to create space for people to ask questions and grow in their faith through openness, struggle, prayer, laughter and worship,' which is one of our core values of our joint partnership vision.

Over the year, varieties of topics have been studied including: the Psalms - including themes of 'trust and protection,' 'navigating change', and 'modern psalms'; aspects of prayer – including 'adoration', 'confession', 'thanksgiving' and 'supplication'; the book of Joel, Philemon, Ephesians and Ruth. Some of the groups tried an African Bible study using different Bible translations and sharing what each passage personally says to each person.

A special THANK YOU to those who lead the groups faithfully and for those who open their homes to host them. New members are always welcome and it has been exciting to welcome somebody from Stephen Hill this year.

Revd. Iain Lotian

DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S WORK

One of the priorities this year was to replace our children's worker Diane Ryan, who left St. Columba to become ordained, and develop our children's work. We have been very fortunate to recruit quickly and Tara Osborne, previously at St. James church, Woodhouse, started in September of this year. Tara has hit the ground running and developed our monthly All Age Worship service, a Sunday school, called Blast Kids, Messy Church, and continued with helping with Stepping Stones.

1. **Blast Kids** – Meets twice a month on the second and fourth Sunday of each month. Blast stands for **B**elieve, **L**earn **A**nd **S**eek **T**ruth and follows the new Christian Union books called SPLASH. Each session involves: Welcome with open conversation on the day's topic; games; a Bible story with a healthy snack; crafts; action songs; circle prayer with a wooden cross. At present there are on average about 6 children who regularly attend.
2. **Messy Church** – has occurred monthly, on the last Friday of every month, on the theme of the Fruits of the Spirit. Numbers have increased considerably with the first one attracting 27 children and 35 adults, and the following ones attracting around 18 children and 17 adults. The sessions start with action songs followed by Bible teaching and a prayer. Then the children go through to do a variety of crafts and games in the hall. After this, everybody goes back into church to share what the children have done and sing more songs. Finally, the children and guardians share a cooked meal together.
3. **Stepping Stones** – is a group for pre-school children, many of whom were baptised at St. Columba, and their guardians, who meet fortnightly on a Friday afternoon. Fiona Burton runs it, with the help of Tara Osborne, Marjorie Hill and Joan Telford. On average, there are

about 8 children and 6 adults who regularly come. They are a very close-knit group who offer great support to one another.

Added to all this have been open the book assemblies at Lydgate Primary school and termly assemblies at Lydgate Infant school.

Revd. Iain Lothian

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN HALLAM

This is a group which meets two or three times a year, comprising members from the six local churches:

- St Francis
- The Beacon at Stephen Hill and Nether Green
- Tapton Congregational Church
- St John's Ranmoor
- St Luke's
- St Columba's

Usually, each church is represented by a clergy member and a lay person.

The group acts as a forum for review of events that have taken place and the planning of future ecumenical events.

- Events that have taken place in 2017 included
- Taize services at St Francis
- A half-day meeting at Tapton Congregational Church to mark the Reformation
- A service during the week of prayer for Christian Unity
- The well-dressing during the Crosspool Festival

I think it is good that such a body meets regularly and seems to work. (Some things have improved in my lifetime!)

John Norman

DEVELOPMENT OF PARTNERSHIP

One of the main areas of strategic focus this year has been developing the partnership between St. Columba and Stephen Hill Methodist. This has happened through regular meetings (About 2 every month) between Revd. Iain Lothian and Revd. Will Fletcher and the continued monthly meetings of a small working party from both churches called the Manse Group. A number of developments have occurred:

1. On Saturday 14th St Columba and Stephen Hill had a partnership day where we looked at our shared values and from this we drew up the following joint vision statement:

We are a community that endeavors:

- To respond to God's love through worship, prayer and service
- To be friendly, inclusive and welcoming; celebrating human diversity in all its richness
- To create space for people to ask questions and grow in their faith through openness, struggle, prayer, laughter and worship
- To engage with our local area, city and world; committed to promoting justice, peace and solidarity.

2. We successfully combined our Lent study groups and our Christmas Church Services including a: Carol Service, Christingle Service, and Midnight Mass.

3. We have begun a joint newsletter from January 2018.

4. We are worshipping together 4 times a month. On the second and fourth Sunday, we have a joint main communion service together, and on the first and third Sunday of each month, we have our early morning communions together.

In addition, Revd. Iain Lothian and Revd. Chris Stebbing from St. Luke's have met every two months to develop links between the two churches. Iain has spoken at the St. Luke's Men's group, and Steve Ellis has preached at St. Luke's. In addition, St. Luke's have helped and advised St. Columba on I.T. developments.

Revd. Iain Lothian

SACRED SPACE

In September, Revd. Iain Lothian and Adrian Scott started SacREd Space, a reflective, creative and experimental service once a month to develop spirituality among churchgoers, but also to be accessible to those who do not usually attend church. Our autumn series of SacREd Space included four services on the following themes: Finding life in letting go; Finding the Sacred in Creation; Finding beauty in the ordinary; Finding hope in the darkness. The evenings don't follow an exact format, but often include times of quiet, a meditation to still minds, a ritual that people are invited to partake in (there is no obligation to participate), poems & writings, and a one minute sermon.

People have a choice at the end of the service to either to take the silence with them or to share in coffee, tea and biscuits. From conversations it is clear that there is a need to provide people with quiet, beautiful, contemplative, communal space to just be; a time for people to let go of their 'to do' lists, anxieties, pre-occupations, and allow them to rest in the silence, music and stillness that is provided. It hopefully serves as an antidote to busy, stressful lives and provides an opportunity to still minds so that people can receive from a deeper place – to hear from that still small voice that resides in us, – and to RE- engage with what is important and life- giving.

There has been an average attendance in the mid-thirties at SacREd Space, attracting people from a variety of church backgrounds including Church Army, Quaker, Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions, as well as non-church goers. The Winter in to Spring series is exploring Spirituality through Art and is on the theme of Light.

Revd. Iain Lothian

SIGNING

Hazel and I have been meeting every week for a signing lesson. I have enjoyed learning new signs for everyday use. We have been practising some of the hymns that we sing on a Sunday which I will try to join in with when present in the Service. Going forward in my signing I plan on trying to put a lot more of my learning into practise in church and maybe try and get the children involved in some of the signing where possible.

Tara Osborne

SOUP RUN

Our contribution to the Churches' soup run continues to be appreciated by the people who come down for soup, sandwich, snacks, clothing, and bedding. Some engage in conversation with us more than others; whilst others chat and occasionally argue amongst themselves!

We have a great team of volunteers some of whom make the sandwiches, and others come down to distribute and chat with the customers. This is truly a 'Crosspool' team with non-churchgoers alongside members of St Columba's, Stephen Hill and Tapton Congregational Churches.

Our thanks to everyone at St Columba for their continuing support with prayers, donations and volunteering.

Eddie Sherwood

FOOD BANK

Monthly deliveries of food are taken over to St Cuthbert's Church Fir Vale where the Food bank is housed. Since the food bank began a few years ago a new kitchen area has been added and a better store for food stuffs.

They welcome anyone who is in need of food. At the same time as distributing the food bags they now provide space for people to meet and to get to know one another. Hot drinks, toast, fresh fruit and snacks are also provided.

The Citizens Advice Bureau have secured some funding to provide an advice worker. More recently English Language classes are taking place and free haircuts are provided. Thank you for your ongoing support with items of food, toiletries and also with donations of money.

Offers of help to transport the food would be welcome.

Rob and Linda Furbey

LUNCH CLUB

Once more due to our wonderful team of volunteers we had another good year for both our Lunch Clubs. Each week the individual teams cater for between 30 – 40 people including diners and volunteers, (new helpers are always required). It is a time of good fellowship in which many new friendships both old and new have been made. The transport enables many to come to Holy Communion before attending for lunch.

Due to mobility of many of the diners our Summer Trips were shortened to a drive round to a new venue 'The Peacock' at Stannington, where we enjoyed a good meal and fellowship, although not such wonderful weather as in the past. We joined together for our Christmas Buffet in December meeting up with old friends.

Once again we would like to thank our wonderful teams of volunteers who make these meetings so pleasurable for our diners.

Gill Wright and Pauline Hornby

MUSIC

The music group continues to function in much the same way as it has the last few years, practicing before each service and meeting on occasional weeknights to choose hymns for upcoming months.

There have been one or two new additions to the repertoire courtesy of Iain (alternative for the Gloria), Tara, and the joint services with Stephen Hill now held each month.

However, there is probably a lot of room to develop these new ideas further. Feedback is always positive with people saying how much they appreciate the music, but as always, I encourage anyone to make suggestions and put forwards their ideas and thoughts as they feel lead by God.

Jonathan Carr

OPEN DOORS

Following on from last years report Bibles are still being distributed to the Persecuted Church. We in our group each month send greetings cards to our brothers and sisters in difficult situations giving them encouragement and support. Their faith is tremendous in these very violent situations . Open Doors have carried out tremendous help by offering business loans and also providing access to water, sanitation , medical needs, food , trauma counseling and safe houses. for our brothers and sisters . Some heartbreaking stories have reached us but in spite of this they still draw people to Christ regardless of the suffering and danger of contacting friends and neighbours. We want to take this opportunity to thank all those who receive our weekly e-mail Prayer Alert and join us in our monthly meetings. Sadly Peter's health is failing and we need someone to take over the leadership of this very important prayer group.

Gill and Peter Wright

EMMAUS WALK

Sadly the Emmaus Walking Group is now feeling the pangs of age and we feel it is right that the group has drawn to a close. We have had approximately five good years of meeting and sharing together on the third Friday thank you to all those who have made this an enjoyable time. Due to people's age and other commitments we had low numbers on only two occasions last year so we felt the time was right to cease. **“There is a time and season for everything under heaven”.** (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

Gill and Peter Wright

WORSHIP GROUP

A new worship group was started in order to look at our services to see: if there were areas we could tighten up on that would improve our worship; if we could make our services more accessible for newcomers; and to suggest new ideas, which would benefit the congregation. We have settled on a regular pattern of services at the same time, which are as follows:

	9 am	10.30 am	7 pm
1 st Sunday	Joint Holy Communion @ St Columba (Taken by Iain L; Will Fletcher; Linda Furbey)	All Age Worship: Led by Tara Osborne + Team (Fiona B; Dora D; Claire F)	SacREd Space led by Iain L; Adrian Scott
2 nd Sunday	No early Service	Joint Holy Communion Service @ St. Columba	
3 rd Sunday	Holy Communion @ Stephen Hill led by Michael Wildgust	Morning Worship – More participatory	
4 th Sunday	No early service	Joint Holy Communion @ Stephen Hill	
5 th Sunday	No early service	Holy Communion at St. Columba (Not Joint – Try out different Communion Services: eg Iona)	

From above a major priority has been the development of our joint services with Stephen Hill, where we now provide four joint communion services a month, the development of All Age Worship and a new service SacREd Space. Tara Osborne, our new children and families worker has given our All Age Worship a new, fresh impetus and SacREd Space has provided a quiet reflective service for many people in the congregation and many people further afield. The point of discussion is our Morning Worship service on the third Sunday of each month, which is still evolving, and where we are trying out different approaches. However, one of the aims is to make that service more interactive and to enable more participation from the congregation. The group is comprised of a wide spectrum of churchmanship and many creative ideas have been suggested, which is extremely exciting.

Rev. Iain Lothian

DEVELOPMENT OF I.T

An increasing number of users and uses, the need to centralise all church owned data to comply with current data protection legislation, and limited office space meant that our IT provision, essentially a stand-alone desktop and laptop, no longer offered an adequate level of functionality and security. There were serious concerns about:

- data security
- lack of “administrator control”
- inadequate control over software with risk of downloading malicious software
- no capability for remote access
- unable to create centralized diaries, to do lists, contacts, etc.
- church data scattered over a number of pc’s – the church pc’s and individuals home pc’s. To move to best practice for data security, we must move towards the centralized storage of all church owned data
- lack of IT support
- we have an increasing number of people needing to access church computers and data

The developing partnership between St Columba, St Lukes and The Beacon also gives the opportunity of sharing resources and ‘back-office’ functions, reducing the need for duplication such as in the production of various policies and procedures. St Lukes and St Columba already share secretarial assistance.

To achieve this we decided to invest significantly in our IT provision, partnering with a local company ESP to provide an additional PC in the office and laptop for Tara; the installation of a network including VPN (virtual private network), and subscribing to Microsoft Office 365. This will allow us to link to St Luke’s for sharing of resources, provide secure controlled remote access for staff and church officers, enable secure centralised data storage, and includes ongoing IT support from ESP.

Peter Brown

And Finally...

As a community we endeavour to:

- Be an inclusive church which celebrates human diversity and welcomes all.
- Create a space where people can grow in their faith, can question and discover the sacred in life through openness, struggle, laughter, prayer and worship.
- Support one another through mutual care and hospitality.
- Be alert to the needs of our local community and the wider world, having a commitment to be in solidarity with those who are marginalised and isolated.
- Celebrate life in all its fullness and cherish creation.

We don’t manage it all the time, so when we stumble and fall, we pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and try again.