

Annual Reports

2020



St. Cuthbert's

Scottish Episcopal Church

COVID-19

Rector's Report

What a strange year this has been. Words like 'unprecedented' and 'new normal' have been used more than we would like. We have witnessed deaths of far too many people throughout the world and we still struggle to deal with this devastating virus - COVID-19.

My thoughts and prayers are with all those who have been affected but also with those who this has affected. People who have not been able to visit their loved ones in care homes or hospitals. People who haven't seen children or grandchildren. People living alone, just missing physical company, the human touch. Such a sad and difficult year for so many, with nobody knowing how we will come out of it.

Other words that have come into my vocabulary, that I never thought I would link to church are 'Zoom', 'YouTube', 'Facebook', not forgetting filming, editing and uploading. I'm sure the Scottish Episcopal Institute and others training folk for ministry have had to change their syllabus very quickly! I'm certain the students we support with the St. Cuthbert's grant for ministerial training over the next five years will come out far more prepared than I am for such things. I appreciate my productions are far from professional, but I can assure you I am doing the best I can – with thanks to those who continue to thank and encourage me for my efforts; it really is appreciated.

This last year has been a challenge and I have to thank the vestry for the work they have done in supporting me through this. I also thank the volunteers and pastoral visitors who have carried out the telephone ministry on my behalf and Revd Margaret for all she has done in her ministry. Bishop Bob has been a great encourager to me personally and we all enjoy the dry humour in his sermons. It's just a shame we have missed out on his lectures this year; but we will make up for it when things change.

We didn't get the opportunity to say a proper thank you to Megan for her many years of children's ministry, as she stood down at Easter and we appointed Caroline as the new Children's, Youth and Families Worker. So Megan, I thank you for all you have done for St. Cuthbert's and especially for me in the time I have been here. Your ministry is truly valued.

Caroline didn't have an easy start, as she was furloughed shortly after starting but I'm pleased to say her enthusiasm didn't wane in that time and she came back with enthusiasm and vigour. Having Sunday School and Youth Group with so few children on YouTube and Zoom is not an easy task and I thank her for her perseverance. Since being back at church for services, it has been lovely to see the youngsters at the Family Service and for Sunday School once a month in person.

Philip was another member furloughed but returned to play for the weekly services on YouTube and then to provide music back in church. Philip has done a lot of thinking outside the box to help me in my ministry. He has also been very kind, in delivering orders of service to those without a computer. Thank you Philip!

The thanks continue to the gardeners, who never cease in keeping our grounds looking beautiful and all the volunteers who allowed our church to be open for private prayer.

Not forgetting Marie, who works quietly in the background making sure I keep on top of things and that the church continues to run smoothly. She has done a fantastic job of making sure that everyone who wanted to return to church to worship has been given an opportunity to do so, receiving bookings and then confirming attendance beforehand, so that we are not over-subscribed for any services and have to turn people away.

But, there was a world pre-COVID and I also thank all those involved in ministries of hospitality, welcoming, reading, interceding, paying bills, singing, sacristans, pastoral visiting, prayer groups, discussion groups, cleaning, decorating, flower arranging, looking after the buildings, volunteering with the foodbank, Verandah café, refugees and all those I've forgotten.

It was also lovely to welcome Lesley Penny for her second year placement from the SEI which ended at Easter.

Lesley brought much experience in preaching and enjoyed learning about the more traditional SEC liturgy and practices. Sadly we weren't able to say a proper goodbye to her and I wish her well in her final year as she approaches ordination.

So many people answering calls to serve God in different ways, as the family of St. Cuthbert's. A wonderful example of love at work.

In various places throughout the Bible we read of creation groaning in labour pains. It certainly feels that way as we continue to journey through COVID 19 and wonder what the future holds. But we are the lucky ones who have a faith built on hope and we all know that out of the darkness of the womb and the labour pains comes great hope as a new child of God is born.

That is my vision for St. Cuthbert's, that out of the darkness and pain of COVID 19, we will emerge refreshed with new ideas of rebirthing our church in this community - physically and spiritually.

The Vestry continue to look at the building and how we make it a place that is functional and comfortable to be used by all in the community, as well as for worship.

Three of us attended a Pioneering Course run by the Scottish Episcopal Institute in the summer and following on from that, a small group has been gathering fortnightly on Zoom, looking at what pioneering means in our context. We are

not meeting to make decisions but to share ideas and use our imagination.

Rolf Billes and I have met regularly to discuss how we can do more as churches together in Colinton and engage the wider community and we have recorded assemblies to send to the primary schools. I also meet monthly with a number of colleagues to pray for Firrhill and other schools in the area and give each other peer support. This was following the invitation from the Head of Firrhill to provide a chaplaincy team, which halted due to COVID. I hope in the future, we will be able to work more closely with the Oxfangs Community Church and support them in their ministry.

I continue my work, mainly online, with the Army Cadet Force, offering a listening ear when needed and encouragement with a weekly post on Facebook. Dreghorn Barracks has a new padre and we have been in touch on a regular basis.

I was very surprised to find that my photograph, entered into the Parish Pixels competition, did so well and thought that following quite a dark year, it should be used to bring some light to the community. To do this, the gardens of the church will be lit for four weeks over Christmas and New Year, with a life size nativity silhouette, provided by Currie Men's Shed and a Christmas tree. Make 2nds Count, a local charity for secondary breast cancer, will be selling baubles to go on the tree to raise money for their charity. There are still other ideas floating around about this, so keep your eyes

open from 9th December onwards. There will be no events planned around this due to COVID, it will be just be a sign of light and hope in the darkness, that I hope the local community will enjoy and engage with.

This year has been different and often difficult. COVID provides challenges and opportunities and I hope you will join me in looking for opportunities to keep our own community of St. Cuthbert's together in prayer and look for ways to build God's Kingdom further in our small corner of the world here in Colinton.

I hope and pray that you all continue to keep safe and well and look forward to seeing you at church in the coming weeks and months.

Revd Nicki McNelly

St Cuthbert's Reports

1. A Brew and a blether
2. Badminton Club
3. Choir
4. Christian Aid
5. Communications Group
6. Eco congregation
7. Flowers
8. Foodbank
9. Garden Team
10. Lay Representative
11. Leprosy Mission Scotland
12. Open Forum
13. Pastoral Visitors
14. People's Warden
15. Phoenix Group
16. Property Group
17. R&R
18. Sacristans
19. Safeguarding
20. St. Raphael's Prayer Group

21. Shalom
22. The Sign
23. Verandah Club
24. Website
25. Young People

A Brew & A Blether

Following government regulations B& B closed after its February meeting and has remained closed ever since. The organisers, Margaret, Christine, Joan and I, met in August and decided that the time had come to close it down permanently, partly because of the continuing restrictions but also because we felt it had run its time. Attendance had been declining although those still coming seemed to enjoy the afternoons.

Accordingly we informed Vestry in September of our decision to close and suggested that once things had returned to “normal” some new people might want to consider organising another form of outreach to the group we used to serve.

**Hilary Pritchard, Margaret Holmes,
Christine Nimmo, Joan Smith**

Badminton Club

A successful year terminated abruptly two weeks early due to government constraints arising from the world-wide spread of the Covid-19 virus. We anticipated restarting in September, however continuing restraints prevent us meeting for the foreseeable future. We cannot tell how that will impact on a Club that has existed for over 75 years.

This season, we were sad when Russell Philp decided to give up playing. He had endeared himself to the Club by carefully matching players with different skill sets to provide balanced games. His subsequent death is a great loss.

Archie Clark

Choir

It is far from easy to produce the annual choir report when it has been impossible for the choir to function since the lockdown began in late March, and when, at present, there is a total ban on singing in church services. With no idea of when this ban will be lifted, this is a worrying and uncertain time for all choirs across the UK, making it impossible, at the time of writing, to formulate future plans.

When the lockdown began, we were busy preparing for our Holy Week and Easter services. A new initiative was planned for Palm Sunday evening: a joint service in the Parish Church, with our respective choirs combining to perform Sir John Stainer's sacred work "The Crucifixion" to mark the start of Holy Week. We hoped that this would be followed a year later with a similar service in St Cuthbert's. It was a real blow when this had to be cancelled. The other initiative was the introduction of a new and more reflective communion setting, to be sung by choir and congregation in the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, which seemed to meet with general approval.

We were all extremely saddened by the passing of Margaret Cowan, a long-standing and extremely committed member of our choir. For all of us, it was a real disappointment not to be able to honour Margaret's life by singing at her funeral. My hope would be that, when singing is permitted once again in church services, we will dedicate the singing of an anthem as a tribute to her. On a more positive note, we have recruited two new singers, one of whom was in the St Cuthbert's choir some years ago, and we look forward to the time when we will be able to welcome them to our ranks.

Throughout the period of the lockdown, the choir members have kept in touch with each other through a weekly newsletter, to which everyone contributed, providing news of their activities. A great deal of work was put into this project by Caroline Seville and Archie Clark, to whom we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude. This weekly newsletter was stopped when the church re-opened for services, but is now being revived on a monthly basis, and will include some discussion of an anthem known to all our members and appropriate to the season.

It is hard to imagine what our services at Christmas will be like without the singing of traditional carols. We all look forward to the day when, once again, the choir can once again enhance our services with its singing.

Philip Rossiter

Christian Aid

There are nine people on the Colinton Christian Aid Committee, four of whom are from St Cuthbert's: Wendy Pearson, Margaret Temple, Jean Wood and Patricia Brignall.

In the past year we paid our final installment of the £2,000 we promised to **Making Agriculture a Business**, a project in Zambia. We took on a short-term Project working with Syrian refugees in Beirut, promising at least £2,500. We were in the end able to give £3,290. We were also able to give £2,225 to the Coronavirus Appeal.

We raised the money through four events and some very generous donations. In the autumn there was the launch and sale of Bill Donaldson's book *Sharing Reflections*. At Christmas, led by Megan Emmerson, we sang carols in the Bonaly courtyards. In February we held the annual and much-loved Quiz Night. In July Wendy Pearson came up with the idea of **Little Gatherings** as a way of reconnecting with each other in small groups after lockdown and raising money for Christian Aid's Coronavirus Appeal.

Because of the restrictions imposed by Coronavirus, the annual Door-to-Door Collection in May did not take place, but many people gave online, our Treasurer set up a JustGiving page for Colinton Christian Aid and we also received a large number of cheques and cash. Altogether we raised £3,330.

My thanks to Megan, Bill, the Quiz Masters and, as always, to the Committee who work so hard for Christian Aid.

Patricia Brignall

Communications Group

The group comprises seven people, including the Rector, Wardens and Church Administrator, who usually meet five or six times a year to look at how best to communicate with both the congregation and the wider community. During COVID this has not been possible.

It was agreed to update and relocate the two notice boards in the front garden. Again, this has been delayed but the new notice board is now at the church and should hopefully be in situ soon.

COVID brought new challenges and opportunities our way with me having to learn to film, edit and upload services to YouTube. It started slowly but I think our services look quite good now.

I would like to thank:

Katie and Tim Brown who come to our aid when things go wrong with the website.

Susan Clark for keeping on top of everything on the website, especially as the work increased during COVID.

Marie, who controls all social media platforms and constantly looks for ways of improving and professionalising our communications.

Nicki McNelly

Eco Congregation: Engaging with Nature for the future

A Tree of Life.

One common feeling many have expressed during lockdown is the way in which the natural world has been a place of inspiration, and solace, when we may feel anxiety and loss of our usual social activity. Having time to contemplate and observe wildlife and the natural world would seem to be one of life's true comforts and enduring treasures.

Our activities in the Sunday School have been necessarily curtailed. Going back to last November we planted some bulbs in and around the meadow area of the church garden chosen as insect-friendly (*Alium*, crocus).

On our first session with Caroline in February we worked on a 'Tree of Life' theme – and painted a tree together adding some wildlife that might be found there. We looked at the tree as a source of shelter, food, shade, wood, and leaf litter: a perfect ecosystem of interdependence. The longevity of

trees in itself is a symbol of endurance and a picture of the overarching care God has for Creation. There are many instances in the Bible of trees as symbols in stories and parables. As it happens, 2020 has been designated a special year of trees, by for example the National Trust who announced a programme to plant 1000s of trees.

The April AGM of Eco Congregation could not take place in Helensburgh and since then the various local events and meetings have been online. Ideas from the newsletters have included sponsoring tree-planting in a Trees for Life Highland Grove; news of a Right to Food Coalition aiming to see Scotland becoming a 'Good Food Nation'; and plans to be involved with the UN Climate Conference (COP26) now postponed to 2021 in Glasgow. 22 April 2020 was interestingly the 50th anniversary of the first 'Earth Day' in the US in 1970 when millions of people took part in activities in America to highlight environmental damage – a reminder of the long timescale for awareness to become heightened.

There were reports of the beneficial effects of lockdown – less car and transport emissions, less traffic in the seas. It was thought that the unusual sightings of Orca whales close to Shetland was due to quieter and cleaner waters. However, with concern focused on the pandemic there is also the risk that environmental concerns will be overshadowed. The convention centre set to host the UN climate talks in Glasgow has been converted into a hospital for coronavirus patients.

With our return to church the Sunday School had an eco-theme in September when Caroline made painted leaf prints with the children. Harvest time necessarily turns minds to the Earth and the amazing bounty it provides – we have very much still to be thankful for. There was also a ‘Creationtide’ theme in the service liturgy reminding us of our responsibility of care for the world. Prince William has begun an initiative to work with children in exploring Nature and the ways in which we can look after it (highlighted in a TV documentary) and I hope we can continue to explore the church garden in this way with the Sunday School.

The Eco-congregation AGM and the UN Glasgow Conference hopefully next year will be much anticipated opportunities to share and learn more about what we can do. Thanksgiving for all God gives us in our world, even in this time of distress and disruption, can endorse our phrase ‘Faith in Nature’, as we take in the miracle of trees on our daily walks.

Kay Dalley

Flowers

My report for the AGM last year began “There are flowers in church almost every week, except during Lent and Advent” and, apparently in 2019 we also “celebrated weddings, anniversaries and Baptisms with some beautiful floral displays”.

How different 2020 has been with no services in church between mid March and September.

It was October and Harvest Festival when we could decorate the church, but instead of flowers on the window sills, there were packets and tins of food destined for Wester Hailes Food Bank, a poignant and important reminder of those less fortunate than ourselves.

Christmas will be our next Festival but whether we will be able to meet on Christmas Eve to decorate the church and, almost as important, be able to chat over coffee and cake, will of course be very dependent on the covid situation in December.

In the meantime I would like to thank all the Flower Fairies for the beautiful flowers they have provided and arranged over the years and to wish them well.

Margaret Holmes

Foodbank

This has been the eighth year we have supported the Foodbank at Holy Trinity Church in Wester Hailes. For the first seven months we collected food in Church on the first Sunday of each month and delivered it to Holy Trinity the next morning. There was also a rota of church members who volunteer on the Tuesday afternoon when the food was being distributed.

In March Covid 19 became part of our lives, the church doors were shut, we could no longer collect food there. However, the foodbank continued to distribute food by various means. In recent years some members of our church have found it easier to give a cash donation rather than food. So, each time the food was delivered to the foodbank, there was also an envelope of cash. When we could no longer collect food in Church Patricia Brignall and I started collecting cash from any church members who wished to continue supporting the foodbank. Once a month the money was transferred into the foodbank account. In the 5 months from April – August, kind members of St Cuthbert's, have donated a total of £1,050 in this way. Sometimes the donations were anonymous so thank you all, whoever you are, for continuing to support the foodbank.

If you would like more information about supporting this outreach project of ours, please contact me.

Susan Clark

Garden Team

The garden team has continued to meet together on the second and fourth Mondays of the month, Covid restrictions and weather permitting. The Covid restrictions were a bit of a pain in the early summer, and the weather has been problematic in the autumn, and as the church hall has been out of bounds, the mid-session coffee break has morphed

into an al fresco socially distanced picnic. However we have also worked individually, glad of being able to do something constructive in the open air during a time our diaries were so empty, so that the end result is that the general condition of the garden is probably better than at any time in the fifteen years I have been a member of our congregation.

My sincere thanks go to Ross Addison, Vivien Bremner, Nick Brignall, Mary Dale and Margaret Holmes who have all contributed greatly to making our grounds attractive.

Bryan Dale

Lay Representative

There have been two meetings of Edinburgh South Area Council since our last AGM. The first was on 3rd March, essentially to discuss the agenda of the forthcoming Diocesan Synod on 14th March. The meeting on 3rd March was very energised despite the growing concerns about the Coronavirus outbreak and some thoughts as to whether or not Synod on 14th March would go ahead. It duly did although with fewer attendees, probably because of concerns about coronavirus.

In his address to the March Synod the bishop said that “Our faith calls us to trust God and not to be fearful ... Faithfulness, not foolhardiness is required; care for ourselves and care for others. Faithfulness requires us to be constant

in our pastoral contact with those shut in by the virus or victims of it, and it requires us to be inventive too.” In the previous year Safeguarding had been an important consideration in the Diocese and there had been an excellent turnout at diocesan led training in January. The bishop made it clear that he expected that all clergy and lay readers, all in ministerial leadership as well as safeguarding coordinators in each charge, would attend training every two to three years, ensuring that we do everything possible to keep others safe. The main agenda item of the March Synod was Mission and Ministry, and their report identified five areas of focus for mission under the acronym SEEDS:

- Serving communities
- Engaging all Generations
- Enabling Ministry
- Developing Disciples
- Sharing Faith

In his address the bishop also made it clear that safeguarding extended to all aspects of our lives including the safeguarding of our planet, so there is a pertinent link here.

In May of this year the South Edinburgh Area Council meeting was cancelled due to the Coronavirus pandemic, and in the absence of an October Synod, clergy, lay representatives and treasurers met in Area Council groupings to discuss plans for Diocesan activities, their related costs and the impact on 2021 quota. The Diocese had incurred deficits in recent years and had been seeking a higher than

usual rise in quota in 2021. Instead, because of the financial pressures facing congregations, the Diocesan Standing Committee decided that by cutting costs they could hold quota at the same level as 2020. Further to this the Provincial Standing Committee decided to make a substantial cut in Provincial Quota (subject to approval by General Synod in December) with the proposal that this is fully passed on to congregations in the form of a 10% reduction in quota. In his Finance Report the Diocesan Treasurer reported that 'Not all congregations have been affected equally by coronavirus. Some have seen donations drop and have lost significant rental income and are now struggling to continue to serve their communities. For them, even a reduced level of quota may not be enough to avoid them having to curtail charitable and mission activities. Any congregation that feels able to contribute an additional voluntary amount of quota to help support other, less fortunate, congregations is warmly invited to do so'. As a result, this topic, was the main topic discussed under Diocesan Finances on the agenda of our Area Council zoom meeting held on 22nd October 2020.

Although arranged at very short notice it was very well attended. The meeting opened with prayer followed by a video message from Bishop John at the end of which he offered the following questions for discussion:

What has gone badly during this time?

What has gone well, and perhaps helped you to glimpse the way forward?

What are your expectations, rather than just your optimistic hopes, for your congregation in the short and longer term?

What missional outreach has been continuing during the pandemic?

What missional outreach will be required during post COVID19?

The chair proposed three main items for discussion from the papers/video received for consideration from the Diocesan office:

The Diocesan Budget

Thoughts on the Ministry Co-ordinator post

Responses to the Bishop's questions and reporting back on morale.

All the agenda items gave rise to rich and energised discussion and if it can be summarised briefly it is to say that a predominant theme was one of change, of 'doing church differently' and that this is a challenge to us all and there is no going back. I will focus on the content of this meeting on a contribution to December's Sign.

Margaret Temple

Leprosy Mission Scotland

We have a long association with TLMS in our church. However, this year I have been unable to send in regular donations from the Blue Tubs. Following the visit of Stuart McAra in January 2020 I sent a cheque for £300.35, this being the accumulated amount donated to TLMS. In March I sent £280, the amount collected from the Blue Tubs at that time. Since then I have not been able to collect Blue Tubs or donations.

Thank you for your continued support and hopefully in 2021 I will be able to resume regular collections from you.

Barbara Tatlock

Open Forum

Towards the end of 2019 the members of the Open Forum finished their deliberations on Peter Singer's book "Ethics in the Real World".

It was thereafter agreed that we would begin a consideration of Richard Holloway's book "A Short History of Religion". An enthusiastic beginning was made as we debated the origins of Religion and critically analysed the chapters on Hinduism Buddhism and Jainism.

Unfortunately this was interrupted in March 2020 by the introduction of the Covid 19 Regulations. The group has not, therefore, met since February 2020.

Wendy Stewart

Pastoral Visitors

Initially, there was no change in the make-up or function of this group until lock-down, when all visiting and home communions had to cease.

At that time, this group was supplemented with a number of volunteers to form a telephone ministry team, to ensure all members of our congregation received a call to find out what help, if any, was required.

As COVID continues, we will continue to re-evaluate to try to make sure the help is given where needed. As my role has become more logistical, for a number of reasons and my time is even less available, I truly value the help given by these volunteers.

Revd Nicki McNelly

People's Warden

In January I began to think about those special events when we meet together, to share food, friendship and fun.

Unfortunately the only event we have been able to hold so far was in January when we had the Burns Supper, catered for by Ross and his team, with entertainment supplied by friends. Who will ever forget Roy and Ali's rendition of "Ah, yes, I remember it well" and Donald's hilarious psalm performed by members of the choir.

And, that has been it, no harvest lunch and only two Brew and Blethers. The February meeting was particularly successful, thanks to the wonderful entertainment provided by Angela's brilliant dancers.

I am sure that during the last few months, when at times it has been really difficult to meet friends face to face, there have been phone calls, zoom meetings and walks in the fresh air arranged. I realise that it is not the same as meeting over coffee in the hall after the service, or just dropping in on a neighbour or friend for a chat, but now that we are able to attend services at least we can worship in our own church and catch up with friends in the garden or outside the hall, as long as we are 2 metres apart of course!

I look forward to seeing you all in church in the very near future.

Margaret Holmes

Phoenix Group

We look back fondly on the gatherings we were able to enjoy together last year and in January and February of this year and look forward, in hope, to future ones, times that shall surely be!

Our Christmas Lunch at Bia Bistrot on Colinton Road was a truly delightful occasion with excellent food and drinks and service from the owner and staff. We filled the whole of the downstairs level with much conversation, laughter and conviviality.

One evening in January, a group of us very much enjoyed drinks, nibbles, finger food, cake and chat around an open fire at Margaret Temple's. We also discussed various possibilities for future activities and social gatherings, now carried forward to 2021.

Jean Haskell kindly organised a Guided National Museum of Scotland Tour of Scottish Galleries Highlights one afternoon in February. Our extremely knowledgeable tour guide, Odile, was very good indeed and covered a lot of ground in a most engaging and fascinating way. Afterwards most of us retired to the Balcony Cafe for tea, coffee and cake.

As always, we would welcome suggestions for future get-togethers, talks and activities as and when restrictions permit.

Margaret Kieran, Jean Myers and Margaret Temple

Property Group

The Property Committee has been reconstituted with an agreed remit from the Vestry. The members of the committee are Ross Addison, Martin Fairley, Iain McNelly and Joan Smith.

Most of the work surrounds taking forward the quinquennial survey and dealing with other day to day maintenance requirements. With the lockdown due to the virus it has not been possible to have the first part of the survey work done but it is hoped that this will be carried out in the near future.

The Committee has also been exploring the replacement of the lighting in both the church and the hall. The current lighting system is reaching the end of its lifespan and consultants were appointed to assist in designing a new scheme. The Vestry will consider this scheme at its November meeting.

All of the regular testing and maintenance of equipment has been carried out.

The Church is very grateful to Ross and Iain for carrying out minor repairs throughout the church estate and to Gavin Wye for clearing the drains on a regular basis.

Property Committee

R&R

**From Isaiah 30, "In returning and rest you shall be saved;
In quietness and in trust shall be your strength."**

Our group met for prayer and reflection on a weekly basis through Advent, using the book "Celtic Advent" by David Cole as our guide. We found this deeply enriching, discovering such richness in our Celtic forebears, and much to accompany us today. We continued to meet weekly during the New Year and began our Lenten study sitting in the South Trancept which became our sacred space. After only a couple of weeks Lockdown and the impact of Covid 19 was felt by everyone. We decided to continue meeting on Zoom and found it surprising how real and present God was in our virtual prayer and reflections. Like many people, Lent and Easter became a completely different and powerful experience for us as we struggled to be living in a time of pandemic. As it became clear "new normal" included churches remaining closed, social meetings limited, extended social isolation for some, R&R decided to continue meeting via Zoom throughout the summer. This became a really important space for us to share, pray and be in the presence of God, and it is a powerful reminder that "church" is wherever we meet in His name.

R&R is always open to anyone from any Christian tradition who wishes to grow in prayer and reflective living.

“I am grateful for a place of peace, prayer and fellowship in challenging times”.

“R and R meetings, especially during lockdown, are inspirational hearing about others experiences with their prayer week. Having finally mastered Zoom, with a lot of help, it is so good to be able to see and hear our group of friends. We now look forward to Advent with our book ‘The Art of Advent’.”

“The practice of "stilling", even if only done once a week, increases my capacity to truly notice and value so many small but significant daily nourishing occurrences that come our way, but tend to go unnoticed or be forgotten. I find myself more likely to become aware of the presence of God in such moments, and also in the beauty and refreshment of nature, and in my interactions with friends and neighbours. My improved "seeing" and "listening" brings me calm and quiet joy.”

“Attending R&R during lockdown gave me an unexpected spiritual online experience. Our group is gentle and supportive and through stilling and prayer has given me the strength and support to live through this challenging year with confidence in my faith- I am so thankful for that.”

Wendy Pearson

Sacristans

The duties of the Sacristan are very much associated with the day to day services of the church and like so many other areas which have been affected by the restrictions in place at present there has been little to do since March. I had just ordered large palms for Palm Sunday, which Margaret Holmes used in making a wonderful arrangement outside the church for that day. Not the purpose they were intended for but good that use was made of them. I also had obtained the new Pascal candle so it too was ready for Easter. After that a long gap before I was delighted to receive some used linen from Nicki a couple of weeks ago - never was laundry so welcome as it represented a return to church, albeit in a limited way. I have just made a trip to the Cornerstone to stock up on candles for the first time in eight months! So the work behind the scenes goes on although I am only able to do some of it. I look forward to when I shall be able to resume full duties with Bev Henderson and Caroline Seville, who has also offered to help when required.

Joan Smith

Safeguarding

This has been an important year for ensuring that St Cuthbert's heeded and followed the advice issued by the Scottish Government, Health Protection Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church regarding Covid-19. All relevant guidelines have been implemented.

Zoom meetings have increased, and in particular the safeguarding for online youth work is robust. A securely held log of online contact is kept by the Child and Youth Worker, with a copy forwarded to me as the Safeguarding Coordinator.

Members of the congregation with particular duties who require registration under the PVG Scheme, have all been processed. We currently have 21 people with PVG clearance.

Christine Nimmo

St Raphael's Prayer Group

St Raphael's Prayer Group is still continuing its good work after some reorganisation.

With an ageing congregation, more of our friends are in need of comforting contact from the church, and I would like to thank all members of the group for their valued devotion and loyalties.

Our group still meet by zoom on the first Wednesday of every month with any updates for our lists. We then have a small service, where we pray for all on this list.

Unfortunately, we have lost three of our members over the last few months. If anyone feels they would like to join us, please contact myself or Nicki.

Judith Mackintosh

Shalom

Shalom began as a reflective prayer group in a very tentative way, nearly 12 years ago, when Wendy Pearson, Jean Myers and Julie Golding felt the desire to offer a time for quiet prayer and reflection. The group began during Advent, meeting in people's homes due to the bad weather. We continued meeting weekly during Advent and Lent, and monthly over the past 12 years, mostly in The Lady Chapel, but sometimes in people's gardens, or houses, and even further afield. We have shared weekends away, "retreats" where we have shared prayers, fellowship and fun and meals together. We have offered our more reflective ways of worshipping with the congregation a couple of times on Sunday mornings. And we have all grown, not only in number (regular attendees of 12-14) but also in our prayer lives and Christian understanding.

'There is a season for all things'. This past years have given us all much to think and pray about, and we are very aware that nothing is permanent, and that things come and go. For Jean and Wendy, we came to a similar conclusion, perhaps for slightly different reasons, though without doubt connected, that now is the time for us to step back from leading and organising Shalom.

We planned to have a gathering of thanksgiving and celebration for our Shalomers but it may be some time before such a large group can meet together again.

We are very thankful for the years we have journeyed together, but now is a time of great change and challenge to the church as we know it, and there will certainly be opportunities for new ways of sharing and being together...

Wendy Pearson and Jean Myers

'The Sign' (Church Magazine)

The April 2020 issue of 'The Sign', which included all the details of the Easter Services and events planned, was just ready to print, when we went into lockdown at the end of March. Unfortunately, The Sign was then paused for 4 issues, until the COVID situation improved and we were able to communicate the news of the safe re-start of services in church from the beginning of September. The September issue returned full of colour, positive words and pictures from our young people, and interesting 'lockdown stories' from members of our Vestry.

The Sign will continue to inform us of forthcoming services in church, online and Zoom 'events', duties, and any other information to keep the St Cuthbert's community connected.

Thank you for your contributions and continued support.

Marie Neil

Verandah Café and Boutique

For 45 years the cafe has provided drinks and refreshments to patients, staff and visitors in the Royal Edinburgh Hospital in Morningside with volunteers from St Cuthbert's staffing it on Thursday afternoons. After a five month closure in 2019 due to fire damage the cafe and boutique reopened.

However in mid-March the Verandah Cafe and Boutique closed again since we were unable to provide a covid-safe environment, and both have remained closed.

Our long term future is now in doubt. Over-seventies, the vulnerable majority of our volunteers, have been advised to avoid contact with large numbers of people, neither the kitchen nor the cafe and boutique can be easily arranged to allow for social distancing, and there are restrictions on movement within the hospital.

The trustees will continue to monitor the situation and consult the members about any future decision.

Hilary Pritchard

Website

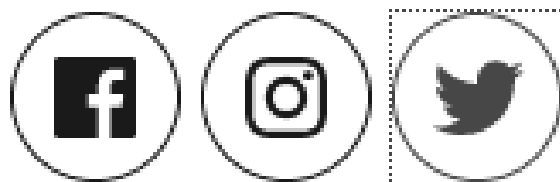
For the 2018-2019 AGM booklet I was able to report that the Church website had been updated and included a more informative calendar. For the first seven months of the Church's accounting year the website continued to provide a

calendar of upcoming services and events and report on significant happenings. With the coming of covid 19 all the Church buildings had to close and all activities in them had to cease. The website calendar was taken down.

Since then, Hilary Pritchard has updated the Pew Notes each week, the Welcome page displayed information about current restrictions for St. Cuthbert's and the wider Scottish Episcopal Church. Although Church members received written/email copies of the weekly service prepared by Nicki and Marie these services were also available on the website for anyone to read. In May Nicki began to produce a YouTube for each Sunday. The first one was hymns but later became a full service. These too could be found by a link from the website.

By the end of August the website was able to report that St. Cuthbert's would be opening for services in September. Numbers would be restricted because of social distancing and people would need to book to attend.

Remember St. Cuthbert's also has accounts with:



Susan Clark - Web Manager

Young People

Firstly, I have to say that I have had an amazing welcome and Megan has done a spectacular job working with the children over the years. Secondly, I am sorry that I have not got to know you all as well as I would have liked over the last few months and I am looking forward to future times when we will be together again. In the meantime, I am happy to get feedback and look forward to hearing from you with suggestions (if you have any) or if you would like to be involved in any particular activity or event, I would love to hear from you!

After a few months of furlough, I started back in July and I have shot several YouTube videos and more or less weekly Zoom calls for Sunday School. I have also tried to keep people up-to-date with other people's Sunday School online material if they haven't be able to do ours. I have also sent weekly emails with activity sheets and from September we have been handing out monthly activity packs to go along with the readings of the week. After the summer holidays, we started the Sunday School back up, allowing us to meet face to face once a month. It is really lovely to be together again.

The youth group lost two of its members who we were sadly not able to give a proper send off to. They are and will be sorely missed and we wish them well with their future adventures. The youth group has been meeting over zoom on a monthly basis. These have been in the form of bible

study; compile and we even managed an online escape room. We invited Christ Church, Morningside's youth group to join us to do the escape room and we are looking forward to meeting together again in the future. More recently the youth group delivered a sermon as written by them at the beginning of October and they have also contributed to the service at the beginning of November. It has been great to be able to share these insights with the wider congregation.

Caroline Daye

www.stcuthbertscolinton.org.uk