I Made a Quilt
A reflection on community

A couple of months ago I decided I’d have a go at making a quilt. It took a while and it was fiddly, but I think I made a decent job of it. I finished it the night before the AGM we’d been planning for a while at my project in Fenham.

This AGM was planned to be different. We had invited all the user groups to send a representative, write a small report and, if they wanted to, they could stand up and tell everyone about their group and the work they did. We weren’t sure how many would turn up or how it would go - as is often the case with community projects, you need to be prepared for all possibilities!

We provided brunch of pancakes and eggy bread, and we were very happy with the turnout. The AGM was a very good event – one of the youth leaders who works in many places in Newcastle told me it was the best AGM she had ever been to!! I am hopeful that the church will carry on with what I’ve started when I move on 😊😊

My turn came to speak, and I got out the quilt I’d brought along as a visual aid. I hadn’t written a reflection but had decided to share with everyone what had been running through my head while I had been sewing the quilt. It went something like this:

I have been working in Fenham for almost 10 years now, and it seems to me that building community is a bit like sewing a quilt. This quilt started out at some tiny triangles of fabric – little bits of material that, while they were quite pretty, probably needed some intervention. I took the little triangles and I sewed them into groups of triangles, I was quite pleased with the little groups, they looked even prettier, and because the triangles were joined together, they were stronger. At this point I had lots of groups of triangles. So, I took the little groups of triangles, and I sewed them together as well, matching them into a pattern as I went. Some didn’t quite fit, but actually, the overall effect was nice – it’s not perfect, but it’s mine.

This seemed to me to be quite a good visual metaphor for building community; but here the analogy has to stop – because what I did next with the quilt was to put a backing onto it and bind
it around the edges. I can never bind the edges of the community we are building at RSM because it will never be “finished”: community changes all the time, groups change all the time, individuals change all the time, and as a church RSM is learning to work with that, they are learning that while it might not be perfect, it’s theirs. So even though my involvement with the project is coming to an end – the community in Fenham will keep on growing and changing without me.