



How Pat crossed the line

Description



Pat Billsborrow was just eight when she heard the divine voice say, “I want you”. She was standing in Durham Cathedral, by the black line where medieval women could not cross. No one else was there.

Growing up, she failed her O Levels. “That’s alright,” her dad told her, “you can get married.” But an education official believed in her, and encouraged her to study through Open University.

A minister challenged Pat, “What are you doing about your call to preach?”

In 1979, Pat found herself in religious broadcasting. She produced programmes for Radio Tees on big issues from conscientious objectors in World War I to persecuted Christians behind the Iron Curtain.

On one of these weighty radio assignments, a Methodist minister challenged Pat with the question, “What are you doing about your call to preach?” The young journalist wondered, “What call to preach is that?”

Her inner eight-year-old child must’ve woken up. Pat was accepted into the Methodist ministry and went to college in 1984. At the same time, husband Bob (pictured with Pat) was made redundant from his job and he went into teaching.

Pat came out of college and had a baptism of fire. She started her ministry in South Tyneside, as the community was suffering the bitter aftermath of the miners’ strike.

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There were foodbanks and soup kitchens, just like today. “It was a time of severe depression,” Pat recalled. “The people were quite downhearted at the time. But they welcomed us.”

Pat was invited in 1994 to lead the ecumenical Church of Reconciliation in Scunthorpe. All-age worship, out-of-school club and parenting classes were among the services offered to an estate of 7,500 residents.

In 1998 the couple moved to Birkenhead for a “priority appointment”. As well as leading churches, Pat started working with the Wirral Methodist Housing Association – valuable experience for when she later joined the MMHS board. *(You can read Pat’s full story in the [summer 2017 edition of Roof & Roots](#), and you can read all about her and Bob’s Diamond Wedding celebration [here](#). Photos: Clive Price)*

Category

1. Our residents

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