

Ballyclare Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Annual Reports for 2023

Session Report

"My God shall supply all your need" Philippians 4:19

All precautions were taken, all preparations made, but in spite of all the predictions given, the frost didn't come, and I had to remove my windscreen protection covers which had not been required! Many circumstances in life are like that and even though we are living in a world where there is much expertise in many fields, including forecasting weather conditions, we don't always know what lies ahead.

As I think about many things and happenings in our fellowship over the past year, there have been things that have happened, that we would never have imagined or taken into consideration or anticipated! The most surprising of these was the retirement of the Rev Stephen Roger from the ministry after serving the Lord in our congregation for the past thirty-two years. It was a long time, as we all battled the varying times of differing circumstances together.

For all of us there are always moments when we have a desire, even for a little time, to lay aside the pressures of life remembering our advancing years and take things a little easier. During the thirty-two years, Stephen and Chris have worked steadily and unselfishly to bring the best of their gifts to the Ballyclare Congregation and have always sought to go the extra mile in each of our lives. This fact was acknowledged wholeheartedly at the Retirement Dinner held on 19th May.

But we all need a break, and eventually the foot must be eased back from the accelerator pedal and things taken a little slower. So, after thirty-two years of faithful ministry we thank Stephen and Chris for all their labours and wish them God's blessing for the years that lie ahead.

That, of course, now left us with a problem, with no minister for the oversight in Ballyclare! Who will take over the reins? Who will be God's man chosen to continue the work in this role? We await with patience His answer! Until that day comes it is the responsibility of Presbytery to appoint someone to look after the vacancy. Rev Andy Hambleton, minister of our Crumlin congregation, was duly appointed and willingly accepted this appointment. Since his involvement, Rev Hambleton has taken on the work here with much enthusiasm and love for Ballyclare and the people here, and although it has added many hours onto his weekly workload he has never once uttered a word of complaint.

Like many other places of worship, the past year or two has not been easy for our fellowship. Although church attendances have increased, we have not seen any growth in membership. We commenced and ended the year with a membership of 41. It has never been our position to approach anyone concerning membership but leave that matter between the individual and the Lord. If you believe the Lord is leading you in this direction and would desire membership, then please approach the Minister/Interim Moderator or Elder and they will put the matter before Session and you will be given an interview. We were delighted recently to welcome into membership Mrs. Trudy Young, who brought with her a Disjunction Certificate from 2nd Limavady Presbyterian Church. We're glad to have you with us Trudy and for your already noted spiritual stance and help with the work here.

We were greatly saddened in April with the death of Mr Christie Spiers. Christie was a very quiet, humble man who had a remarkable testimony and we do remember his daughter Sharon and also grandson Christopher and the family circle in their loss. We are also mindful of others who have been hurt through personal illness or the passing of loved ones in recent times, and we remember them all in our prayers.

It was to our delight and great advantage to welcome many speakers to our pulpit during the vacancy, some on a single visit and some many times, and as there have been so many I will without naming names thank them all collectively and wish them God's continued blessings as they serve Him in this way. There have been two occasions when because of an extended visit it was necessary to provide living accommodation and because of this David and Heather Watson attended to the needs of Mr. & Mrs. James Murray, and Alastair

and Phyllis Logan looked after the family of Mr. & Mrs. Lucas da Costa. We thank both families for their kindness and loving care at these times.

There were many special meetings and gatherings throughout the year, each with their own purpose and objectives, which included outreach work, missionary interest, praise services, and others, and I note these below, the dates they were held and the purpose for same:

Open House	-	Speaker Rev Hambleton	-	18 th March
ACTS Visit	-	David Gordon	-	2 nd April
Annual General Meeting	-	Callum Webster (C.I)	-	5 th April
Retirement Dinner	-	Stephen & Chris Roger	-	19 th May
Tract Distribution	-	May Fair, Ballyclare	-	23 rd May
BBQ	-	Carnfunnock Country Park	-	9 th June
Stew Day	-	In aid of E.M.F	-	25 th June
Holiday Bible Club	-	Y.P.A. & Church Family	-	14 th -18 th August
E.M.F Visit	-	Phil Dunn	-	22 nd August
Visit to Moldova	-	John Watson	-	26 th September
Harvest Weekend Services	-	Rev Hambleton	-	21-22 nd October
E.M.F (Adam Urban, Poland)	-	Special Visit to Crumlin	-	22 nd November
Y.P.A. Carol Service	-	Rev Hambleton	-	15 th December

We were very glad when our friends in the Reformed Presbyterian Church accepted our invitation to have a joint meeting in the church on 'Old Years Night' and we worshipped together singing psalms and having the preaching of the Word from their minister Rev Nathan Hawthorne. We continued our fellowship together as we all joined for supper after the service.

There were many other activities that took place throughout the year and some of these are recorded in the individual and particular reports from some of their leaders. We continue to remember Mums & Tots, Children's Meeting, Junior and Senior YPA, Sunday School and Bible Class, Ladies Missionary Prayer Meetings, Camps, Holiday Bible Club, and all leaders and helpers.

As is always the case there is always a band of very willing helpers who labour week by week, and to the most part receive very little recognition. Be assured we appreciate all that you do and we thank you immensely. Some of these brothers and sisters are included in the list below, and in no particular order:

All our musicians – Helen McCartney, Rob Evans, John Watson, Emma Watson, Deborah Logan.
Paul Tulloch for all the audit work and compiling of the updated 'Members & Friends' Directory.
Heather McFall and her very willing team in attending to all the catering needs.
Stephen Logan, who deals with the minibuss and with David Roger, organizing the BBQ.
June Tulloch for the beautiful floral displays that she produces as and when required.
To all the cleaners and the deacons for all their work. If I have omitted you, please accept it as a genuine oversight and was by no means intentional.

We have many needs in Ballyclare, perhaps the most prominent being for the vacancy to be filled, but let us depend on our Lord, who as His Word says "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19
Ken McDonald Clerk of Session