



**Dromore First Presbyterian Church  
( Non-Subscribing )**

**Rampart Street**

**DROMORE**

**Co. Down**

**( Charity Number NIC101289 )**

**2023 Trustees Annual Report**

The church is governed by Trust Deed and acts in accordance with the Constitution and Code of Discipline of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

We, the trustees of the Dromore First Presbyterian Church (Non-Subscribing), are pleased to recommend that the details contained in this Trustee Report for 2023 explain 'the main activities undertaken by the charity to further its charitable purposes for the public benefit' and 'the main achievements of the charity during the year'.

Alistair S. McDonald

Illy Mait

David Holt

## **Minister's Report**

The 26th October 2023 marked the 6th year anniversary since my installation as minister of Dromore. It continues to be a joy and a privilege to serve this congregation. On a personal level, it is significant for me that this is the longest I have ever served in a single congregation, where previously, in a different denomination, I had been moved more regularly.

The year 2023 was another full and productive year in the life of our congregation. In terms of Sunday Services preaching topics that were embarked on included the following:

- Exploring Genesis
- Exploring Exodus
- Exploring Numbers
- Exploring Deuteronomy
- Wrestling with Joshua
- Get out your pruning shears!
- What have you dedicated your life to?
- The Priceless Gem and Living Water
- A short history of Mothering Sunday
- Can you sin before you are born?
- Can doubt Sometimes be a Good Thing?
- When last did your heart burn within you?
- A Story of Cross-Community Compassion
- Waiting and Belonging
- The Wind and Flame of Divine Love
- A Mountain-Top Experience
- Where does courage come from?
- A Life of Joy
- The Sound of Silence – A reflection on the song lyrics
- Imagine – a reflection on John Lennon's song
- Everything I own – a reflection on Bread's Hit Song
- That's how the light gets in – Reflecting on Leonard Cohen's song Anthem
- Into my arms (Interventionist God) – a reflection on Nick Cave's song.
- Like a Bridge Over Troubled Water – A reflection on the song lyrics
- Turn Turn Turn – A Harvest Sunday Reflection
- One Day at a Time 12 Steps to Sanity
- The Courage to Change – One Day at a Time
- Hope for Change – One Day at a Time
- Making a Decision – One Day at a Time
- Facing Ourselves – One Day at a Time
- He Ain't Heavy – Remembrance Sunday

- Coming Clean – One Day at a Time
- Hope: Reflecting on the Life and Teaching of Victor Frankl

In addition there were a number of reflections on ‘This Day in History’, as we briefly reflected on significant dates and people throughout the year. These included -

- The birthday of Dr Seuss
- The Birthday of King Henry II
- The death of Terry Pratchett
- Abba’s Song– Boomerang
- Iraq War, Supernovas and Psalm 8
- Beethoven and Richard Dawkins
- Hans Christian Anderson and Dr Martin Luther King
- Sir Isaac Newton
- Shakespeare, to be or not to be?
- Sir Tim Berners-Lee – World Wide Web and Unitarian Universalism
- The Founding of Volkswagen
- Tiananmen Square, Emily Davison and Churchill's Speech
- Lord Alfred Tennyson’s Religious Views

All of these sermons and reflections have been made available on the Church Website, the YouTube Channel shared with the Banbridge Congregation, as well as on the Church Facebook page.

Our Sunday Worship in 2023 also included visits from Rev. Stephen Reain-Adair, Moderator of the Presbytery of Bangor, the Right Rev. Lena Cockcroft, Moderator of the NSPCI, as well as guest preaching by Mr Paul McCabe, Dr. Tony Moodie and Rev. Colin Campbell.

We were also privileged to be able to celebrate the baptisms of:

- Holly McNeil on 22nd January
- Nina Alice Emily Cowley on 19th February
- Pippa Alice Morrison on 19th February

Other highlights in terms of Sunday Worship included -

- Mothering Sunday on the 19th March
- Palm Sunday on the 2nd April in which readings from Matthew’s Gospel were read and candles extinguished as we recounted the passion narrative.
- Easter Sunday included a puppet show with Beany and Sheenie, put on by Brian and Wendy to make the message of Easter accessible to the young and the young at heart.

-A Songs of Praise service on the 7th May to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III. This was followed by tea after the service and the dedication of a plaque for new cupboards installed by the Women's League upstairs in the hall in honour of Martha Dickson.

-A Country Gospel Service on Fathers Day on the 18th June in which Brian and Wendy were joined by, Julie Black, Brian's Mom, Margaret and Maureen Smyth in playing some well-known country gospel songs.

-A Children's Service at the end of June featuring Beanie and Sheenie in another puppet show entitled: Shaun the Sheep and the Good Shepherd

-Harvest Sunday was as always a wonderful celebration as Jean McIlroy and her team transformed the Meeting House with beautiful flower arrangements and decorations.

-Our two Communion Services on the first Sunday of May and first Sunday of November were again, moving opportunities to remember Christ in the breaking of bread and the sharing of the cup.

-Remembrance Sunday was another poignant moment to remember with gratitude the sacrifices of those who had gone before us. Gratitude is expressed to David Dickson for laying the wreath for us.

-Our December Advent/Christmas services were well attended with members in the congregation helping to do readings at the Carol Service on 17th December, Beany and Sheenie making further appearances on the 24th in a puppet show entitled 'Beany's Christmas Rap' as they reminded us all of the Christmas Story. A big thank you to Sonya Russell and Norma Shields for coordinating refreshments in the Ervine Memorial Hall after another successful and well attended Carol Service.

In the first 6 months of 2023 our Sunday attendance was worryingly low. This prompted the Session and Committee to draft a letter to the congregation highlighting our concern at the low attendance and drawing attention to the fact that the future of the Church depended upon members participating and attending. Response to the letter was very encouraging as our Sunday attendance number from June onwards showed a marked improvement beginning to get close to an average attendance of around 50.

It is always encouraging to see that we can attract wider family and friends to our special services. And yet all of us in the congregation and the leadership ought to be mindful of the fact that in order to ensure a future for our congregation, we need to attract more people to our services, whether those be from within our existing church families or new-comers. A question that we might all need to consider is what our unique identity and contribution is within the churches of Dromore and how we can use that unique identity and contribution to attract those who cannot find a home in any of the other churches in the town. Boosting our profile on social media, particularly on Facebook, may be one of the most effective ways of advertising ourselves in the town.

A very big thank you to all who, in visible and invisible ways have contributed to and helped to enrich and make our Sunday Worship Services special, whether this is opening up and closing, helping to decorate the church for special occasions, providing flowers, assisting with readings, singing solos or simply being a warm, friendly and welcoming presence for regulars and visitors who come through our doors.

Other special events that took place in the life of our church community in 2023 include:

- Line dancing which started up again on the 7th March – organised by Lynn McCormick
- Ceili Dance Saturday 22nd April – organised again by Lynn McCormick
- A Quiz Night on Friday 24th March with Tom Fairley hosting the quiz and Donna sourcing prizes and coordinating refreshments on the night.
- The annual graveyard clean-up took place on Saturday 23rd September from 9.30 am to 1pm and was thankfully well supported
- Coffee Morning held on Saturday 2nd December 10am-1pm organised and coordinated by Donna McDonald.
- Carol singing in Supervalu on Friday 22nd Dec from 5-6pm.

It is also with great sadness that we reflect on the lives of those in the congregation who passed away during the course of 2023 and the funerals that were conducted to remember, honour and celebrate their lives:

Norman Henry Lindsay	25 July 1932 – 31 Jan 2023	Buried 2 February 2023
William Cecil Truesdale	21 July 1941 – 23 May 2023	Buried 27 May 2023
Francis McKee (Frank) Scott	14 Oct 1936 – 10 June 2023	Buried 13 June 2023
Tanya Russell	25 Jan 1977 – 26 June 2023	Buried 29 June 2023
Helen Sarah Scott	03 April 1966 – 27 Sept 2023	Buried 30 September 2023
David (Davy) McConaghy	10 May 1939 – 29 Sept 2023	Buried 2 October 2023
John Presha	18 Feb 1946 – 7 Dec 2023	Buried 9 December 2023
Willow Jennett (née Greer)	18 Mar 1946 – 19 Dec 2023	Buried 23 December 2023

Apart from those who have assisted in various ways, both visible and invisible, I wish most especially to thank our Elders and all in our Committee who have provided me with great care and support and help with the smooth running of the Church. I feel honoured to serve with each of them.

## **Finance Report 2023**

Our consolidated bank account figure for 2023 was £399,102.38 compared to £409,765.02 in 2022; leaving a loss of £10,662.64. To sustain a level in the future where we are able to operate and pay bills, which have rose significantly in 2023, if we as a congregation could, if possible, increase our FWO even by a small amount, this would make a big difference overall.

In 2023 Church attendance was down quite significantly compared to previous years.

### **General Church Account**

#### ***Income - £38,876.31***

FWO envelopes fell by 16.7% in 2023; £29,060.78 compared to 2022; £34,900.09

Harvest receipts increased by £90.00 in 2023; £2,270.00 and in 2022; £2,180.00

Rebates were received from Power NI for electricity accounts for the Ervine Memorial Hall; £600.00 and the Church; £600.00

The Bridge Club continue to use the Ervine Memorial Hall on a Monday evening and have provided a total income of £2,640.00

Line Dancing totalled £165.00

Ceilidh Dance totalled £140.00

Generous donations were received in respect of; the late Helen Kinghan, the late Roy Clarke and the late Sadie Flanagan

Just Giving; anonymous donations totalled £321.38

The Quiz Night raised £370.00 for the Turkey/Syria Earthquake Appeal

The Sunday School bank account was closed (bank fees were too high), and the money transferred to the No 1 a/c. This amount was £419.39

Bank Interest which was credited to the main bank account amounted to £1,435.43 in 2023, compared to £493.83 in 2022. This was due to the increase in interest rates

No Gift Aid was received from HMRC in 2023

#### ***Expenditure - £352,878.93 (£300,000 of this amount was transferred to new investment accounts)***

Rev. Brian received a salary increase of 5%. This was agreed by the committee

The committee made a decision to refund Rev. Brian one visa application which totalled £2,404.00

The annual Joint Incidental and Moderatorial Fund fees were £720, denominational fees, £610 for Sustentation Fund, £114 for Sunday School fees and £10 to the Trustee Company.

The Denominational Charity contributions are Benevolent Fund (for those in the denomination who find themselves in need) £150, Christian Minister's Fund (for training ministers) £150, Bodel-McKenzie and Porter Funds (£10 and £50 respectively), the Orphan Society £200 and the Minister's Widow Fund £150.

**Comparisons of main expenditure from year 2022 to 2023:**

Nest Pension rose by 5%

HMRC national insurance rose by 2.8%

Organist Supplies increased by £60

Pulpit Supplies decreased by £155.00, this was due to Tony Moodie and Paul McCabe very kindly volunteering to preach in the absence of Rev. Brian

Bank Charges were much the same; 2023: £276.22 against 2022: £287.57

NI water costs rose by 30%

SM Vint Accountancy fees were up by 10%

EJ Landscapes, grass cutting was down by £540.00

Nichol Oil for heating the Ervine Memorial Hall and the Church increased by £913.12 in 2023

Arthur J Gallagher, Church and Hall Insurance rose by 15%

Power NI expenditure rose by £540.00 in 2023

TH Jordan; printing of Church FWO envelopes increased by £20.00 in 2023

As a Church we are very generous in supporting our nominated charities throughout the year. The 3 Christmas charities; NI Air Ambulance, Reach Mentoring Ltd and Shelter box reached a total of £883.16. These charities will be paid an amount of £300.00 each, as agreed by the committee, in 2024.

Carol singing at SuperValu raised £221.30 for Action Cancer. This amount was sent on directly by SuperValu. We thank everyone who sang and to Audrey Anderson who played the keyboard.

***New Investments were opened to help our Church money grow due to interest rates beginning to rise in 2023. The investments are:***

£100,000.00 invested in March 2023 for 1 year at 3.7% interest in Ulster Bank Money Desk Account

2 x £100,000.00 2 year bonds invested in April and May 2023, each at 4.05% interest They were both invested in the Progressive Building Society; one with an existing account and the second a new account



## Building Fund Account

### ***Expenditure - £6,946.02***

CCTV was installed after the Church break in. This amounted to £1,476.00

All Fire expenses totalled £4,512.00

New lift ladder for the Church roof space was £440.00

New keys and locks totalled £125.00

### ***Income- £4,442.07***

Building Fund envelopes fell by 10.7% in 2023; £2743.50 compared to 2022; £3071.50

Kind donations of £120.00 were received after the Church break in

Interest received from the bank was £390.57

Burial fees totalled £840.00

A donation was given to the building fund by Maureen Smyth in memory of her late mother, Dora McIlwrath

Fee for erecting a headstone was £100.00

Bank Details are below to make BACs payments or to set up a Standing Order, if so desired:

### **FWO Receipts account**

Ulster Bank

Sort code: 98 05 60

Account Number: 12440355

### **Building Fund Receipts account**

Ulster Bank

Sort code: 98 05 60

Account Number 12440439

I would like to sincerely thank Marie Holmes for co-ordinating the very talented organists, Lorna Beggs and Ann Mills for recording and banking all Church donations and also, to Joe Martin for guiding me as treasurer. There are so many more people to thank who give freely of their time and work so hard to make our Church operate and keep it relevant.

My sincere thanks to Rev. Brian and Wendy for their dedication to our Church and for the love and thoughtfulness they give to our congregation. Please let us all support Rev. Brian during Sunday worship as he explores our faith through meaningful and inspirational sermons.

*Sonya Greenfield*

## **Property Report –**

### **January 2023 to December 2023**

#### January

- David Wilson changed two external lights

#### February

- The heating system has not been working in the session room. The pump was air-locked but this has been fixed.
- 1 Boiler in the kitchen has not been working. Ivor and David swapped the boiler from upstairs in to the kitchen. Both boilers are now working in the kitchen.
- Tom Fairley got a quote for new lighting in the hall.
- Victor Shields has 2 guys organised to fix the damp in church.

#### March

- New LED lighting was installed in the church hall.

#### April

- Certificate for Entertainments was received. The fire extinguishers need to be checked in the next few months.
- Signs of anti-social behaviour were witnessed around the church.

#### May

- The holly tree has been cut down.
- There was a bill for £1,074.00 from fire defence.
- Yew tree in the corner of the church trimmed by David and Ivor
- The plaque for Martha Dickson has been installed.
- Joe sourced all the parts to fix the photocopier.
- Countryfile were promoting 'no mow' May. The committee have agreed to leave cutting the grass for a month for the sake of the insects.
- The church experienced a break in via the side door (session room side door). This was reported to the police. Thanks to Davy Dickson for logging it with the police in the morning.
- David Wilson bought new locks and Tom's son David fitted them. Tom's son David fixed the session room door lock. Thank you to David, Tom and David.

#### August

- A CCTV system was installed on the church property.

## September

- The Church Watch sign was been stolen. Tom reported this to the police. Our church is part of this watch. It was launched in the Elim Church and Tom attended.
- Picture donated by Norman Lindsay was put up in the church hall. Many thanks to David Fairley for this.
- Margaret Moodie replaced a washer on a running toilet in the ladies bathroom.
- Graveyard clean-up was a great success. Well done to all involved.

## November

- Thanks was expressed to Joe Martin for repairing the photocopier.

Most of all I would like to thank David and Ivor who both worked tirelessly throughout the year with numerous duties that mainly go unnoticed. Also thanks to Victor for all his help over the year.

Tom Fairley

## **Sunday School Report: March 2024**

Sunday School recommenced in the middle of September. As numbers were quite small, we decided to have just one class this year with ages ranging from approximately 4 to 10 years. Sharon, Sonya, Ivor and myself take the class on a four week rota. This year we are very ably assisted by Kaitlyn and very much appreciate this extra help and support.

James' mum, Emma, has also volunteered to help out at Sunday School when she can and we look forward to her joining us as soon as Access Ni has been granted.

Each Sunday, we follow a scheme called Bibletime in which all age groups study the same story but complete different follow-up activities depending on their age. This works well and the children seem to enjoy the various puzzles etc while being introduced to a new Bible Story each week.

Once again the Rev Brian and Wendy organised and performed a very memorable Children's Nativity Puppet Service. Some of the children also took part in Bible Readings and musical items. Thank you to all who made this Service so meaningful and enjoyable.

Thanks also to Santa who took time to pay a visit and the Church for providing selection packs for all of the children who were present. A huge thanks once again to the Poole Family from Supervalu who gave all of the children and teachers a large selection pack. We very much appreciate this very generous gesture.

All of our Sunday Schools, sadly, are suffering from declining numbers and there have been no activities or events organised by the Denomination so far this year.

Philip, once again, has very kindly offered to provide the eggs for the children's Easter Egg Hunt on Easter Sunday. The children really enjoyed this last year and will be excited to know that it is also happening again this year. We are also indebted once again to the Poole Family for their very generous donation of Easter Eggs to the children and teachers of our Sunday School.

As we head towards Summer, we hope to be part of a bigger Church Outing before our Children's Day Service at the end of June.

I would just like to conclude this report by thanking all of the Sunday School teachers and the Rev Brian and Wendy for their support and commitment again this year. Thanks also to the Church Committee and the entire congregation for their support.

We are so lucky to have a very committed and talented group of children and teachers in our Sunday School and I would like to conclude by thanking them for their dedication and loyalty throughout the course of another year.

## **Women's League Annual Report 13th March 2024.**

Last Spring the Women's League was supported by the Rev. Moodie in making the decision that monthly meetings were no longer practical. The Secretary now notifies League's members of forthcoming events on the What's App Group or by telephone.

The League continues to assist with Church events and Funerals as necessary. We also aim to support support events held by other Churches in the town and to attend Regional League Meetings.

Our first outing in April was to a Visitors Evening at Killinchy. Mr. Colin Robinson, gave a "Braid Scots Danda" into our Ulster-Scots heritage. A most informative and entertaining evening.

It was special to see so many of Martha Dickson's family at the service on 7th May. After this service the new storage cupboards in the Hall, funded by Martha's Memorial Donations, were dedicated in her memory. Martha was a loyal, hard working, long term member of our League.

In the Autumn members attended a Visitors' Praise Night at Banbridge Road Church and a Missionary Fund Raising, Fashion Show at the Cathedral Hall.

On 28th November we were delighted after four years to reinstate our Ladies's Christmas Dinner. As an experiment the Riverside Staff kindly catered for us here in the Hall rather than at their Tea Room. This proved popular with a record number of 32 attendees including some very welcome visitors. We concluded our usual festive entertainment with Carol Singing, once again greatly enhanced by Audrey Anderson on keyboard.

On Friday 1st March, World Day of Prayer was celebrated in Dromore for the first time since Covid. St. Colman's hosted the Service which, significantly this year, had been prepared some time ago by the Christian Women of Palestine. Wendy Moodie and Sonya Russell took part in the Service and it was encouraging to see how well our Church was represented in the congregation.

A sincere thank you to the ladies who support the League also to Linda Dickson, Treasurer, Norma

Shields, Secretary, and last, but not least to Meena Poole who ensures that all members start each day with an uplifting message on their phones.

This concludes the Annual Report for 2023 – 2024.

Signed: Sonya C. Russell Chairperson.