



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

Rampart Street
DROMORE
Co. Down
(Charity Number NIC101289)

2024 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 2024 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'.

David Black

Jeffy Ments

Quinn J. McDonald

Ministers Report

As I reflect on the year that has passed, my first thought is to thank all those who give of their time in hidden and not so hidden ways in keeping our Church running. Thanks especially to the Elders and Committee who give of their time to make sure that we are being good stewards and custodians not only of our church finances and our church buildings but also more especially of our church community itself. I am ever mindful of the rich heritage that is ours as being the oldest Presbyterian Church in Dromore.

It has been another full and eventful year that has thankfully seen some members returning to worship who we hadn't seen for a while. This has been encouraging and has helped to ensure that our numbers have continued to be on the healthier side of 40-50 on most normal Sundays.

Some of the highlights of 2024 have included Gavin Byrne's presence with us as a student minister on placement from Dublin. Gavin has enriched our worship by bringing a small taste of the Dublin Unitarian Church's ethos with him in his preaching, children's stories and prayers.

Other highlights include:

- **In January** Daniel Wright from Reach Mentoring came to receive the cheque from our Christmas Charity Collection and spoke about the organisation's work mentoring pupils in schools in Banbridge and Lurgan, giving children who perhaps have challenges at home a space to be heard and listened to and to be supported and encouraged. Kaitlyn McMurray offered her time to volunteer at Church as part of her Duke of Edinburgh, helping Ivor with some of his Sunday duties, assisting with setting out the tea before the service and assisting with Sunday School. We took a retiring collection towards the Cork Unitarian church after the devastating news of the fire in their meeting house. This was increased to £500 by the committee.
- **In March** on Sunday 3rd, the congregation celebrated the baptism of Isla Eleanor Jody Moulding (daughter of Gillian Kelly and Lloyd Moulding, and granddaughter of Elma and Will Kelly). It was a joyful occasion for the Kelly and Moulding families and their friends, some of whom had travelled from England. On the 12th March on Mothering Sunday we had a wonderful Mothers day Service with gifts of flowers being distributed to all the ladies of the church. Starting Holy Week with Palm Sunday it was lovely to have Paul McCabe preaching while I led the rest of the service. We also had a very meaningful Tenebrae Service on Maundy Thursday, a meditative service of light and shadows reflecting on the last hours of Jesus' life before his crucifixion. Some of our members also responded to the invitation to attend the Newry Good Friday Service which I participated in with Rev. Norman Hutton. Easter Sunday was well attended with the choir singing a special item and a solo from Maureen Smyth who sang 'In the Garden'. Beanie and Sheeny also made an appearance in their Easter Puppet show. A generous donation by a church member was made for another wonderful Easter Egg hunt for the youngsters in the church.

- **April** saw Rev. Simon Henning leading the service on the 21st preceded by a wonderful day of fun as Lynne McCormick organised a Car Boot Sale on the 20th April.
- **In May** we celebrated Communion with Donna and Joe as Elders Serving the Bread and the Grape Juice. At the end of May the Presbytery came to evaluate various aspects of the life of our church including property, finances, records and the work and witness of the church. On 8th May we had a church and graveyard spring clean prior to visitation.
- **In June** we had a combined Children's and Father's Day service on the 16th June with Banie and Sheeny making another appearance in the Puppet Show entitled "The Parable of the Problematic Son". We also celebrated the Baptism of Martha Vance, daughter of Linzi and Jonathan. Victoria and Kaitlyn McMurray assisted with prayers and readings while Martha Dickson read a poem and Robert Dickson played a piece on guitar. At the end of June, Presbytery held a visitation service in which they reported back from the work of evaluation that took place in May. Presbytery were very affirming of the work that is being done in our Church community and the state of our finances, records, property and work and witness. At the end of June we also held a church picnic at Tollymore Forest which was well attended.
- **In August** Gavin Byrne, Student Minister from Dublin, introduced himself in light of his upcoming placement in Dromore.
- Across **August September** while Wendy and I were away on leave services were led by Paul McCabe, my dad Tony Moodie and Rev. Colin Campbell. From the initiative and inspiration of Sonya Russell, August also saw the beginning of a second evening of Bridge for beginners starting with some taster classes. The response greater than expected. This has developed into a very significant weekly event that is not only a further source of income for the church but also a significant place of community building that has been well supported by a number of our own members.
- The first Sunday of **October** saw the Church beautifully decorated once again again by Jean McIlroy and her team for our annual Harvest Service. We were blessed as usual with the choir preparing special pieces for the service as well as Catherine Russell singing a solo item. A thank you to those who prepared the eats in the hall. And for the celebration of Wendy's and my having become UK citizens. A thank you to all who helped to distribute flowers and some of the produce to some of our older members, as well as non-perishable items that were donated to Via Wings and the Storehouse Community Foodbank in Banbridge.
- **November** started as always with our Communion service which I shared with Gavin Byrne who shared how his own understanding of Communion had changed over the years since his childhood, his time as a friar in the Dominican Order and then his time as a member of the Dublin Unitarian Church. Amy and Ivor as Elders helped serve the elements of Bread and Grape Juice. This was followed a week later by Remembrance Sunday which was led this year by Paul McCabe who gave a very personal sermon reflecting on his grandfather's service in World War II. The wreath was laid by Stuart Russell, son of Gary and Catherine.

- **December** was a busy month as usual with the first Sunday of Advent service being led by Gavin Byrne, Beanie and Sheeny making an appearance with 'Beanie's Christmas Quiz' on the 15th December with a visit also from Santa. There was a wonderful attendance at both the children's service on the 15th and the afternoon Carol Service on the 22nd a service shared between myself and Gavin. On Monday 23rd December members of the church sang Christmas carols at Supervalu from 5-6pm, accompanied by Audrey Anderson on keyboard, raising £210.63 for Action Cancer. In addition, over the Advent Christmas period we raised a total of £930 to be split between 3 Charities: Links Counselling; The NI Heart Chest and Stroke Foundation; Belfast Mission to Seafarers (Moderators Charity).

It is with great sadness that we remember those from our community who died in the past year:

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|---|---------------------|
| Paul Beggs | 28th May 1987 | – | 1st March 2024 |
| Leslie Greer | 19th January 1942 | – | 27th September 2024 |
| Rosemary McMillan | 5th May 1933 | – | 11th October 2024 |
| Maureen Jackson (née McIlwrath) | 26th March 1940 | – | 26th October 2024 |

In terms of Pastoral Care – I probably gave a wrong impression at the Presbytery Visitation where I indicated that due to denominational and presbytery pressures I was only doing emergency pastoral care. That was not entirely accurate. I would do wider visits than that, particularly to the older members of the congregation who are unable to come to church who would get between 2-4 visits a year. I am also very grateful for the pastoral care that Maureen Smyth has engaged in with the sending out of cards at Easter, Christmas and times of ill-health. She estimates that around 100 cards have been sent out in the course of the year.

I am also very relieved to announce that I have given up Clerk of Presbytery.

The Treasurer's report appears later in this report and it is encouraging to note that our income continues to be healthy in relation to our expenses. The decision to invest some of our money last year in order to earn interest has proven to be a good one. Sonya is to be thanked and commended for the time and care she puts into keeping our finances in good shape and for her diligence in reporting to our Session & Committee Meetings. A thank you also needs to be extended to all who so faithfully support the church financially.

While our attendances at church showed a significant improvement over the previous year, the challenge of the future remains. In terms of addressing the issue of growth for the future I believe that we are going to need to be pro-active, especially in a time where church attendance is dropping for many churches all over Northern Ireland. It has often been said that if you aim at nothing you will hit it every time. And perhaps that has been part of our problem. We are not aiming at anything. I wonder what it might do for us as a whole community if we began to set some targets for ourselves, that over the next 12 months leading up to our next AGM we

aim to get at least 10 new regular worshippers on a Sunday, whether that is from within our existing church families or if it is from inviting new-comers into our church community.

If we consider those who have joined our church over the years (including most recently) the evidence shows in our own church community that the most effective way of getting anyone to come along to a Sunday service is by personal invitation and personal relationship

This is the task of every member of the congregation and cannot rest solely on the shoulders of the minister, elders and committee. We need to get the whole congregation mobilised to become partners in meeting our target of increasing Sunday attendance each Sunday by at least 10 people over the next year.

And perhaps this needs to extend to a 3 year plan of 10 new members each year? If we are successful we will potentially have between 60-70 attending every Sunday by the beginning of 2027. Even if we fail to meet these targets at least we will be aiming at something rather than nothing.

I believe that our Church has something unique to offer the people of Dromore. I also believe that Dromore is big enough that even if a small portion of the town would be potentially interested in what we offer as a church, we should easily be able to meet such targets if we put our minds to it and come up with a collective strategy.

We have come from a rich historical heritage. Let us together make sure that we safeguard this heritage for the foreseeable future.

God bless

Brian Moodie

Property Report

February 2024

Rev Brian raised the issue of limited parking at the church – should we paint lines in the car park?

Rev Moodie got quotes for a webcam. This would be fixed opposite the pulpit at gallery level. A link with a laptop to record or broadcast would cost £1,300.00 inc.tax. Helen suggested that she would be interested in purchasing this in memory of Tanya.

March 2024

I thought painting lines in the car park would not work due to the rough surface of the tarmac – people will have to park sensibly.

The lighting and fire extinguishers have been fixed in line with requirements for the entertainment licence.

Sonya Russell requested hand towel dispensers for the disabled toilet and kitchen. David Wilson acquired and fitted these.

Rev Moodie has taken advice from Gareth Greenfield re: webcams for church. Rev Moodie will explore this and other options.

April 2024

Emergency lights fitted in the hall and in church.

David met with grass cutting contractors to renew their contract

The damp wall in the church needs work before the visitation in May.

Gareth Greenfield has sent a few links for webcams in church, but these cameras were not able to move. Maureen suggested bringing some 'blink' cameras to see if these were viable to work in Church.

The ladder in Church roof space is very steep it was agreed that a clear out of the roof space should take place and not to use it as a store in future.

May 2024

David and Ivor painted the front of the Church around the pulpit.

I got topsoil for around the graves as some graves need attention. We can use this topsoil to touch up some graves.

Rev Moodie did an inventory of what was in the roof space – some things can be dumped.

Maureen sent a link re: the webcam. There are some options to explore.

M&S stuff could be moved to cupboards.

18th May for Church and Graveyard clean up.

Curtains need fixed in the hall and David Wilson said he would fix.

Pole in hall needs painted.

June 2024

David Wilson thanked those who helped to empty the roof space. With a possible donation from the Women's League, it might be an option to build some cupboards in the vestry.

August 2024

Possibility of a graveyard clean up. Weeds need spraying once a month.

The Visitation recommended that there should be safety rails across the windows on the gallery windows – David Wilson to source ongoing

It was also recommended to take photos of all church furniture – Tom Fairley to follow up.

September 2024

A discussion ensued about this new heating system. David suggested that any members of the Committee that had any doubts or concerns about the heating system could go and visit Blackskull Methodist Church as they have installed this system.

Rev Moodie agreed to contact Mervyn Allen to arrange a time when the Committee could visit. The same contractor would also do the damp proofing. David Wilson mentioned that Tom might be able to apply for a grant to install the new system.

The graveyard cleanup was a great success and Rev B Moodie thanked all who participated

October 2024

A few people visited Blackskull Methodist church to view their heating system

I received a quote from CDS Green Energy for supplying and fitting a new heating system in our Church Hall.

It was decided not to pursue the Green Energy heating system at this time but too seek out further advice on both the hall and the church damp and heating problems.

There has been no update on the safety rails across the gallery in Church.

I have follow up on taking pictures of all Church furniture..

Rev Moodie thanked all those who helped during the graveyard clean up.

November 2024

Gary and I visited a contact in Markethill to discuss grants to install a new heating system, but this proved unlikely.

It was agreed to look at the damp issue in the Spring. New insulation in the hall might be the answer. David and Tom agreed to explore this option.

December 2024

I asked if anyone knew anyone that could get a quote for fixing the damp-proof or insulating the church.

Also, if anyone could get a quote from a painter.

Gary Russell said he would contact Jonny Beattie.

David Wilson has ordered oil.

January 2025

There is some Perspex that has come off the back of the church following the storm.

Issues with the two boilers are ongoing.

A painter has quoted £1780 + vat for painting the windows and £8,000 + vat for painting the whole church including materials and labour.

David has also arranged two builders to look at cracks at the back of the church.

I have to query the VAT cost at the consultation meeting at the leisure centre.

A discussion ensued about the Perspex and grills over the stained-glass windows. David to get quote for grills for 5 stained glass windows

February 2025

Tom, David, and Rev Moodie attended a meeting in the Leisure Centre on 12th February to enquire about funding for our church. They also have a zoom meeting planned with the administrator from Rosemary Street Church to find out how they have accessed funding for building work. The maximum funding available would be £20,000.

A survey would have to be done by a selected surveyor. This would create a report that would identify what specific work needs to be completed.

David still has no price for the window grills. He thinks it might be quite expensive with little benefit. He agreed to decide when he sees what the cost will be.

I have to source a salt bin.

The committee agreed not to renew the Entertainment Licence.

Thanks to Ivor for all his work throughout the years and hope it's not too long before he is back in action. It is when someone is not there that you realise how much they do which goes unnoticed and we all really appreciate your tireless contribution.

I would like to thank David who organises most undertakings of the property committee.

Also, thanks to Victor and Gary for all his help and advice over the year.

Tom Fairley

Sunday School Report

Sunday School recommenced in the middle of September. Currently, we have 8 children on the register, 4 of whom attend regularly.

This year, we are very pleased to welcome Emma Hopkins to our team of teachers and thank Emma very much for joining our rota on a monthly basis.

In October, we were very saddened to hear of Ivor's illness and wish him well as he continues his recovery. Ivor has been a very committed SS teacher for a huge number of years; we miss him greatly and look forward to his return, health permitting.

At present the SS teachers are Ivor, Sharon, Sonya, Emma and myself.

Thanks to the Rev Brian and Wendy who once again enthralled us all at the Children's Day Service with a very thoughtful and entertaining retelling of the Christmas Story through the use of Beany and Sheenie, two very famous puppets. Thanks also to some of our young people and their parents who also contributed to this Service with musical items and readings etc.

We are always indebted to the Poole family of Supervalu who ensure that all the children and teachers receive Selection Boxes. Santa Claus, himself, even found the time to visit and present all of the children in the congregation with a selection pack.

We organised a very enjoyable trip to the Pantomime in January. 26 children and their families enjoyed the "Sleeping Beauty" in the Lagan Valley Island Centre and we would like to thank the Church for purchasing the tickets for the children and teachers to attend.

We are already looking forward to Easter and thank Philip for once again, kindly providing Easter Eggs and treats for the children's Easter Egg Hunt.

In concluding, I would just like to thank all of the teachers and the Rev Brian and Wendy, the Church Committee, the entire congregation and most importantly our children and their parents for their loyalty, commitment and support throughout the year.

Sunday School Superintendent: Helen Dickson

Women's League Annual Report

During the past year, WhatsApp, backed up by telephone calls as required, has proved successful in keeping ladies notified of forthcoming events. As there are no longer rotas for cleaning, ladies are also advised of dates for clearing of the Church and Hall and Graveyard tidying.

Norma and I are happy to continue coordinating this WhatsApp Group.

Last May and September a small number of ladies attended the District Meetings organised by Mrs Carol McAvoy and held in Holywood.

Our Harvest Supper was a very special evening for the congregation as we celebrated the granting of Rev Brian's and Wendy's British Citizenship. There were balloons, red, white and bunting and a beautifully decorated cake to make the occasion.

On 30th November eleven ladies indulged in a wonderful "Victorian Christmas" afternoon tea at Rademon.

Then in December, not to be out done by the men, the ladies also made the Halfway House the venue for the Christmas Dinner. Twenty ladies attended and greatly enjoyed the lovely food, festive fun and good fellowship. We shall book again to next year.

Supported by Rev Brian and Wendy a new initiative last month was our "Coffee Morning" A great turnout of ladies met at "Aroma" for tea/coffee and a chat. One lady later commenting what we all felt – that it was lovely to meet those with whom we don't usually get a chance to talk. We plan to repeat this.

The Women's League as most of us recognise it, dated back to the early 1980s when it was then reinstated by Mrs Joan Black supported by Mrs. Violet and Mrs Mrs Isobel Dickson.

More recently in 2017 the 70th Anniversary of the Ulster District of the League was celebrated throughout the denomination.

However now, as in most of our churches, the number of active ladies has decreased and it is with regret that we have decided to wind-up our Women's League in its present form.

We know that all ladies of the Congregation are so thankful to have Rev. Brian, supported by to wife Wendy ministering to us and wish to support them wholeheartedly.

Our ladies will continue to:

- support the Session and Committee
- assist with Church events and Funerals
- assist with Fund Raising
- support other Churches in the denomination and, most importantly,
- ensure that our Congregation is represented at events held by other Churches in the town

In effect the ladies will continue in the ethos of the Women's League which is to:

- provide companionship and prayerful practical support
- offer hospitality and a welcome to All.
- encourage charitable giving and
- to bear witness as Liberal Christian Women.

AGM 5th March 2025

Women's League Treasurer's Report

Linda McNeill as details of the women's league finances dating back to 1982. Her mother, Mrs Isobel Dickson, was a long serving treasurer.

The account just closed was opened on 27th July 1984. In 2011, after the death of her mother, Linda took over as treasurer. We thank her sincerely for her most efficient work over the years.

The following is her final report: -

At the end of February 2025, we had a balance of £5826.58 in the Women's League account. On 28th February 2025 we closed the account, transferring £5550.00 to the church building fund the remaining £276.28, plus £108.96 cash in hand, was used to reimburse Mrs Sonya Russell expenses of £323.24, paid by her on our behalf.

We have retained the remaining £62 to be used for future expenses or until the ladies of the Women's League decide its best purpose.

This concludes this report.