

MILLISLE AND BALLYCOPELAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH TRUSTEES REPORT 2024

CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT – To bring glory to God through worship and by demonstrating the love of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The members of the congregation are committed to one another under God and aim to encourage and welcome all families and individuals, no matter what their circumstances, into our fellowship. During 2024 we as a church celebrated our 250th anniversary. This made the year very special, and we held several special events to mark the occasion. We set a theme for the anniversary “Walking by Faith”. The moderator of the General Assembly started the celebrations by taking our harvest service near the end of September 2023 and planting a tree to commemorate the occasion. Our celebrations continued into 2024. We held a congregational dinner at a local restaurant, we then held a Flower Festival over three days in May, which was very successful. The highlight of the year was being given a civic reception by Ards and North Down Borough Council which was held in Bangor City Hall. All the local politicians were in attendance along with members of our congregation. The Lady Mayoress spoke highly of our achievement in reaching 250 years as a congregation and presented us with a plaque from the council. A lovely finger buffet was supplied, and a good night was had by all.

We finished off our celebrations with a special service in September which was attended by past ministers and members. A time capsule which contains memorabilia from the past and present was buried at the front of the church to be opened in twenty years' time.

Apart from the celebrations, session members dealt with the various challenges relating to the spiritual aspects of the congregation and members are thanked for all their support both prayerful and practicable during the decisions that have been made. Our congregation is divided into districts, and each elder is allocated one. They are asked to visit each household in their district at least 3 times a year to deliver church literature etc. They are also the contact between families and church if our help is required.

We offer our sympathy and continued prayerful and practical support to those families in the congregation who suffered bereavements in 2024. Our Pastoral Care team strive to visit those

in the congregation who are suffering emotionally after a bereavement or illness, who are feeling lonely or are housebound. We hold our Sunday morning service each week with an evening service as announced. We hold an All-Age Service once a month which concentrates on the younger members of the congregation. We had our annual services over the Easter period, a Harvest Service in September and our annual Christmas services all of which were well attended. Over the Christmas period we held a processional carol singing throughout the village in conjunction with the Church of Ireland. It was a wonderful way to get the community together and to outreach to them. It is hoped that this event will become an annual one.

We continued to support Christian Aid along with having retiring offerings for various charitable organisations who attended and preached to the congregation over the year.

Our organisations – Sunday School, Bible Class, Prayer Time, Manna (Men's fellowship), Tuesday Club (senior citizens group), Girls' Brigade, Walking Group, Church Choir, Bible Reading Club, Bowling Club, MAD (Millisle and District) Crafters, Tea by the Sea continued to meet and to all leaders who always give of their time to run each organisation we say a big thank you on behalf of Kirk Session for all the dedication and commitment and assure them of our prayerful and practical support.

Kirk Session members have a keen interest in the organisations and the reports received at meetings from those assigned to each organisation have been very encouraging as we aim to bring God's message through them to our congregational members and those in the surrounding area.

Reverend Flaherty is kept busy with his work in our congregation, the congregation of 1st Donaghadee and as Clerk to the Ards Presbytery. He has to conduct two Sunday morning services each week as well as dealing with all spiritual and some practical aspects of both churches. We as a congregation give him, Karen, Joshua and Stephen our prayerful and practical support always. His Clerk's role is a busy one as he has to attend meetings as and when required and be available to deal with queries from other ministers in the Presbytery.

We are grateful to our Lord and Saviour for being the centre of our congregation over the past 250 years and we pray that he will continue to bless us in the years that lie ahead.

Mary Startin – Clerk of Session

