

Lisburn Trustee's Report 2019

At the end of another year we acknowledge God's blessings on His Church and on our congregation in particular as it is 40 years since the first meetings were held to establish a "New Work" in Lisburn.

In a year when we have seen legislation to introduce abortion and same sex marriage imposed on Northern Ireland there are some who are disappointed and perhaps even disheartened. What hope does the Church have in face of such problems and opposition? However we negate the power of the gospel when we place problems before promises. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus promises Peter, "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Christ is building His church.

That's why Martin Luther wrote:

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing; were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing: Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He; Lord Sabaoth, His name, from age to age the same, And He must win the battle.

We have been blessed by the leadership and counsel of our Interim Moderator Rev John Hawthorne who has fully recovered from his surgery during the year. We appreciate the willingness of the Rev John Watterson who covered for him when he was incapacitated.

During the past twelve months in our vacancy we have been reminded of how God has blessed our denomination with so many great expositors of God's Word and they have been a blessing to us. We record our appreciation to Rev Hawthorne for his diligence in arranging pulpit supplies from all the presbyteries and also for his own faithful preaching.

We have continued our prayer meetings prior to the evening service led by the Elders and deacons and the Elders have also continued leading the midweeks in Lisburn and Moira, which focussed on the pastoral epistles (1 & 2 Timothy & Titus). These prayer meetings have been well attended with on average of 16 on the Sabbath evening and 18 at the two centres on Wednesday evenings. We continue to promote the spirit of prayer among our members by providing a family prayer calendar which is designed to give opportunity to pray for every family and member at least once a month. It includes various means of outreach both within our congregation, congregations within the Presbytery and the wider church. In addition monthly prayer letters from Galway, Nantes, Australia, Convoy and Stranraer are shared with the congregation.

The Elders met formally on eleven occasions, which included an annual joint meeting with the Deacons and also met informally on a number of occasions for coffee and fellowship. As a Session we continue to have responsibility for the Cookstown Society and seek to support organising pastor Paul Wright who joins us for the Session meetings. We provide an interim elder in Knockbracken congregation and Session also agreed to assist Dromore congregation by supplying an interim elder until February 2020 when it will be reviewed.

Session wants to record their appreciation of the former Clerk of Session John Somerville who, after being appointed on the 20th March 1983, has served in this role with faithfulness,

diligence, and with wise counsel. With effect from 1st September Marcus McCollum has taken over this responsibility.

The Elders, in pairs, carried out the annual visitation of the families with the topic of "Election and Call of Ministers" seeking to explain the steps and procedures that need to be followed in calling a new minister.

On the 7th May the congregation received permission from Presbytery to issue a call to a suitable candidate which will remain in force for the term of the vacancy.

On the 6th November, Session examined the preferences expressed by the congregation and it was evident that we should organise a congregational meeting to discuss calling a minister.

On the 28th April, Gregg & Evie Somerville presented their daughter Julia Margaret for the sacrament of Baptism which was administered by her grandfather the Rev Ray Lanning.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was observed on three occasions in January, May, and October with an average attendance at the Table of 49.

We are thankful that there have been no detrimental changes to the roll of the congregation in 2019. There was an average attendance of 71 at our morning services and 55 at our evening services. It has also been encouraging to welcome visitors to our services .

We are also thankful for the children in our congregation, who meet regularly with their parents for the "Arrows" for fun and games. They regularly attend the Sabbath School with eleven participating in the annual exam. We are thankful for those who teach in the Sabbath School complementing the teaching by the parents in the home. We also encourage our young people to attend the church's camps and were pleased that several did over the summer.

Little Tots continue to meet bimonthly on Monday mornings when the childminders and toddlers come for play, craft and a Bible lesson.

Through the Upper Room ministry we reach out with gospel to the local community. This last year saw an average of 15 attending the weekly Tuesday night meetings.

We continue our Nursing Home Witness visiting two Nursing Homes Pond Park & Nicholson House and after a period of Psalm singing the gospel message is presented to the residents and it is warmly received.

In August we had our fellowship week when each morning Rev John Hawthorne took a series on the subject "What's in a name". These were well attended with an average of 35 people enjoying the talks, discussion and the fellowship over coffee afterwards.

An outreach morning was held in September when we hosted a "Macmillan Cancer" Coffee morning which was very well supported and raised £1,241.24.

In March the ladies started a "Book Club" which meets monthly to discuss the Christian books they have read and the insights gained.

We are encouraged by the spirit of the congregation and their support of the outreach efforts to spread the gospel in Lisburn.

We exhort our members to use their God given gifts and talents in His service and to be much in prayer as we seek God's guidance to call the man of His choosing to be our new pastor. We need to pray for God's help and assistance to know how to respond and deal with the increasing negative and hostile world in which we find ourselves.

The work of the congregation is not our work but the Lord's and it our privilege to be involved in it and we look to God to bless it.

Psalm 90

¹⁶ Let your work be shown to your servants,
and your glorious power to their children.

¹⁷ Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us,
and establish the work of our hands upon us;
yes, establish the work of our hands!

Marcus McCollum

Clerk