



**Chairperson AGM Report 2025**

**Wednesday 5th February 2025**  
**7:30pm**

*Sharing the Love and Hope of God with East Belfast*

**257-267 Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT4 1AF**

I almost can't believe that I bring this, my seventh, report as Lead Pastor Of Megain Memorial Church of the Nazarene to this Annual General Meeting. During these past years, not only have I had the privilege and honour of journeying with the local congregation here, but I have gotten married, been ordained as an elder in the Church of the Nazarene, become father to three wonderful daughters and had the honour of leading many to Jesus Christ. As I sit and write this report, I continue to be filled with thankfulness and gratitude for all that the LORD has done in my life personally through the life of the congregation here, and continue to look forward, in His will, to the many more years we will hopefully spend together *Sharing the Hope and Love of Jesus with East Belfast*.

Once again 2024 proved to be another difficult year for us as a people as we experienced the lose of people held dear to our hearts. Whilst, of course, they have received their eternal reward, our hearts still ache at their loss. We remember with deep fondness Tommy McMillan, Roddy Roberts, Lucy Quinn and Vi Moore, much loved and valued members of our Church family here at Megain. We also remember former Pastor, Rev Edward Cairns, and former Church member and friend Craig Phillips. We rejoice that they have heard those much coveted words from their beloved Saviour, "*Well done, good and faithful servant.*"

Once again, I am so glad that we did not mourn as those who have no hope and we thank God for the faithful example of those who have gone on before us. As the writer to the Hebrews wrote:

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."* // **Hebrews 12:1-2a**

As we reflect on the year that has passed, and look forward with hope and anticipation to that which is to come; let us do so with the mind of Christ, with eyes fixed firmly on Him. He alone is our Hope. He alone is our Strength. He alone is our Prize.

### **2024 Highlights**

As I consider 2024, there are a number of different things which spring to mind straight away. It will not be possible to cover all of them in this report; but know that as we reflect, it is so apparent that the LORD has been up to a new thing in our midst.

### **Megain Loves to Eat!**

If 2024 has taught us anything it is that, at Megain Nazarene, we love to eat!

2024 has seen a year of great growth in our Olive Branch ministry; our formerly weekly, and now fortnightly, community meal. Offering a place for physical warmth, hot food and good conversation, we have seen numbers swell and tummies filled with it proving to be the highlight of many people's weeks. The connections and relationships which have been built and deepened through this ministry is very exciting, and is already seeing people not only become more comfortable in and around the church building, but also beginning to attend additional ministries and, in some cases, Church services.

My heartfelt thanks goes to our Associate Pastor, Pastor Joanne McFarlane, for her vision and leadership in this ministry over the past two and a half years, and I know that she too is very excited about what God might do as we continue to earn the right to speak into the lives of those who come across our doors as relationships are built. Thanks must also go to our team of volunteers, namely Clayre and Hugh McMaster, Sabrina Close and Stephen Phillips, who regularly come along and get stuck in. Thank you for all that you do!

2024 also seen the birth of our monthly Sunday evening Meal and Testimony evening, Mealtimes at Megain. It has been a joy to gather together, normally on the first Sunday of the month, to fellowship over a meal, worship in song and hear stories of how God has and continues to transform lives. Kicking off in May 2024, it was a deep privilege to be able to interview my own parents, Rev Stephen and Sharon Robinson, whilst they were home on

holiday from the United States. Other speakers at this have included Rev Ken White (Bangor), Dr Peter Rae (Nazarene Theological College), Dr John Kyle (former Local GP and Politician); as well as hearing from some of "our own" such as Dr Graham Greenlee, Mrs Audrey McClelland, Mr Gary Heenan, and also a selection of others who shared what Megain means to them as part of our Anniversary Celebrations.

As I read through the Gospel narratives, as well as of the Early Church in the Book of Acts, the importance of eating together and spending time in fellowship is reiterated over and over again. It is part of what it means for us to be the Church, and I encourage each and every one if they have not yet taken the time to come along to make these a priority over this upcoming year.

### **Ministries to Children and Youth**

You will see from our Children's Director report more detail on what has been a significant year in the life of our 0-18 year old ministries. It has genuinely been a God-given dream come true to once again become a Church with a thriving children's ministry and not just have children in through the doors of the Church throughout the week, but also on a Sunday morning for Sunday School. Our Megain Kids: Sunday School continues to grow from strength to strength, with the children firmly becoming a huge part of who we are as a Church family. The back corner may be noisy at times, but it is full of life, fun and young souls who are eager to learn more about the things of God. Not only are the children coming along, but they are bringing their families with them—connecting in with the various ministries and events within the Church. A huge thanks to our Children's Director, Mrs Chloe Robinson, for all the hard work that goes on behind the scenes—as I've said previously, if she wasn't my wife I would be thanking her constantly, and just because she is does not diminish the thankfulness this Pastor feels for their Children's Director. Of course, none of this happens in isolation, and the Sunday School teachers and helpers are owed an enormous amount of gratitude for their investment in these young lives. I pray each one of you know and are aware of just how thankful we are for each of you. Seeing this ministry thrive week-on-week, being invited to join them on their first Sunday School trip in many years, seeing them perform so well and pack the Church out for the Nativity and Children's Day...and indeed engage in a marvellous *Mystery Island* Holiday Bible Club, does this Pastor's heart good. The future of Megain Nazarene is very bright indeed; and the Best is Yet to Come!

Of course, MK: Sunday School is not the only ministry and outreach we have to children and young people. Starting with our Megain Tots ministry, headed up by the wonderful Pat and her 'ninjas', who faithfully give of their time each Thursday morning during term time. Focussing primarily on building meaningful relationships and *Sharing the Hope and Love of Jesus with East Belfast*, our Megain Tots ministry continues to thrive and be known as a Tots Group which is intimate and life-giving; a safe place for parents to bring their children and enjoy a time of play, conversation and a cup of tea or coffee. Times so meaningful that they have seen some of those who attend become a permanent fixture in the Church family over this past year.

MK: Connections, our primary school aged Friday night club, continues to be a fixture in the local community. With consistent attendance of children, meaningful relationships being built between the children and the leaders, MK: Connections is an important and vital ministry in the life of the Church and I wish to personally thank each and every person who has been involved in the ministry, not only this past year, but throughout its almost two decade existence here at Megain. I would also like to put on record my thanks to Mr Stephen McMaster for his vision in starting this ministry in the 2000s, and for his wife Joy's support, over those years. 2024 seen them take the decision to step back from helping with this ministry; but we thank them most sincerely for the impact of their leadership and help over many years. We also place on record our thanks to Stephen for his service on the Church Board, over a number of stints.

2024 also saw the relaunch of our Megain Youth ministry and whilst, admittedly, this was a slow burner at the start, this is a ministry which continues to grow week on week, with many young

people from our local community engaging in a time of Bible Study, Games and even engaging in NYUK events. We look forward to see all that God will do in and through the lives of our young people in 2025, and are so thankful to the team who serve in this way. For many years, there seemed to be "back door" which children would walk through after leaving Primary School, however we are delighted that with the introduction of a well-structured and well-run Youth Ministry, this no longer appears to be the case. Thanks be to God.

Please continue to pray for all of the leaders, junior leaders and children involved in our 0-18 year old ministries. Indeed, they are not only the future of the Church, but are very much it's present. May God capture each and everyone of their hearts, may they encounter Him at a young age and serve Him all of their days.

### **Growing Community Influence**

When I arrived on a six month assignment, 6 and a half years ago (!), one of the main comments I received as I begin to engage with the local community was, "*Oh, I thought that Church was closed.*" Whilst known to the people who attended, the richness of Megain Nazarene was being missed by the local community who assumed that because the front of the building was not being used, that the Church must be closed.

However, as we fast forward from 2018 to 2025, the reputation of the Church outside of the walls of the Church continues to grow in a positive manner. Now, when people speak to me about Megain Nazarene, they talk about a place where they experience love, compassion and welcome, where people are authentic and where faithfulness is lived out. Not only are these our values as a Church, but in a society where more and more are turning from "organised religion", this should come as a huge encouragement to each and every one of us. God is building His Church, and we have the privilege of being a part of it.

This year has seen the Church building once again used by a variety of community groups, local businesses and networks and forums within the local East Belfast Area including, but not limited to, Funeral Partners, East Belfast Community Development Agency, Inner East Forum, East Belfast Churches Network, Ulster Tower Street Community Agency, East Belfast Anti-Poverty Alliance, Newtownards Road Local Action Group, East Belfast Sure Start and many more. It is a privilege and honour to allow our building to be used to serve our community, and we give God thanks for our strategic placement on the Newtownards Road, and pray that our influence would continue to grow.

As well as serving on many of the aforementioned networks and forums, it is also a privilege for me to serve as a Board Director of both East Belfast Sure Start and East Belfast Community Development Agency. Whilst I serve in these capacities in a voluntary capacity and as an individual, I recognise the privilege that it also is to represent, in an unspoken manner, Megain Nazarene and the Kingdom of God in this way. I continue to pray that God will continue to open doors for service for Megain Nazarene in this community and enable us to continue to *Share the Hope and Love of Jesus with East Belfast* in life-changing and life-giving ways.

Perhaps, however, the best illustration of the impact that the Church is making in the lives of local people is the enormous growth of our *Breakfast with Santa* event. From it's humble beginnings a few years ago to having to cap entry this year as **151** members of our local community came in through the doors of the Church for a morning of fun and laughter, family fun and, of course, family pictures with Santa. An incredible morning, during which the Hope of Christmas was communicated and families continued to feel at ease inside the walls of the Church, we were blown away with the positive feedback received from many people who we had never met before who came in through the doors. I encourage you to never underestimate the significance of well run events like this, which not only meet a need in the community, but also put on show the *Hope and Love of Jesus* as we serve Him as His people. A heartfelt thank you to each and every person who was involved in this amazing event in any way—from setting up, to frying bacon, to doing crafts, running quizzes, greeting people at the door, restocking tea

and coffee, running to the shop for more milk, taking or posing for pictures, dressing up as Santa, or even just bringing their family along; events like this could not happen without *YOU* and we are so thankful for you.

### **Global NCM Team Meetings (13th-19th May)**

Another highlight of 2024 was that as a Church we had the deep honour and privilege of hosting the Global Nazarene Compassionate Ministry Team Meetings from Monday 13th - Sunday 19th May. What an honour it was to have Nazarene leaders throughout the world not only use our space for their meetings, but to take our Church upon their hearts with many continuing to pray daily for us as a congregation. With leaders from the six regions throughout the world present, it was a deeply impactful experience for me as your Pastor to join with them in their meetings, to feed into vision casting and also hear more and more about the incredible work of Nazarene Compassionate Ministries throughout our world.

May we never forget that we are a part of something so much bigger than ourselves. Whilst, first and foremost, we are a part of the Global Family of God; we are indeed a part of the Global Church of the Nazarene which has a presence in 156 world areas...for context, that's more than McDonald's. As a missional Church, not just globally, but also locally, we play our part in bringing about lasting change and transformation in the lives of people all throughout the world. I continue to be amazed at the faithful giving of the Church congregation here to the work of missions, and as you will see from our Mission Director's Report, as a local Church you faithfully and sacrificially gave £3688.01 to work of Mission throughout the world. All of this, of course, in addition to your faithful giving through Tithes and Offerings.

Thank you so much for your faithfulness in giving throughout this past year. Whilst you may not feel like you are doing much, the significance of this giving to the Kingdom of God reaches much farther than you could ever begin to imagine. Thank you for bringing about change in the lives of people who you may never meet on this side of eternity.

### **Church Anniversary Weekend**

A significant date in the calendar of the Church continues to be our Church Anniversary Weekend. In 2024 we celebrated 73 years of the Church of the Nazarene in East Belfast—and what a weekend it was. With special guest speaker, Rev Dr Deirdre Brower-Latz (Principal of Nazarene Theological College, Manchester), our weekend together was deeply meaningful and a real blessing to all who were able to attend.

Starting with a Church Board Vision Morning, Deirdre lead us so powerfully and prayerfully through a time of Vision Casting which refocussed our minds on what God is doing in our midst and where we sense He is planning to take us in the future. I want to take this opportunity to really encourage you to make sure that you come along to our service on Sunday 9th February where we will be taking time to share this vision with you in more detail.

Following the Vision Morning around 25 of us headed to Neill's Hill, Ballyhackamore, for our Church Anniversary Lunch. We shared a great time of fellowship, good food and laughter together. As I look around, the thankfulness and privilege which I feel to be Pastor of this remarkable congregation flooded over me. This was, of course, the first time in many years that we had enjoyed an anniversary lunch together, but I want to encourage you to mark your calendars for our 74th Anniversary celebrations on the 3rd weekend of September this year, and then again for the big one, 75th Anniversary celebrations in 2026.

Deirdre then shared an incredibly powerful and encouraging message at our Anniversary Service on Sunday morning. Deirdre is a gift to the Church of the Nazarene, and to hear her articulate so clearly and honestly the hope that our Church brings in Jesus' Name was a true, true blessing. This, then, was followed by another great night at Mealtimes at Megain where Sabrina Close, Dale Davey and Margaret Jackson shared with us how they have found a home as part of our Church family here and shared "*What Megain Means to Me*".

### **A Vision to Propel us into 2025**

As we look to 2025, I can genuinely say that my heart is filled with hope-filled expectation. God is on the move in this place, He is doing a new thing amongst us. From the youngest to the oldest, by His Spirit, God is speaking and woo'ing and building something truly remarkable in this place. As previously said, we will share more of the Vision for 2025 on Sunday 9th February during our Church Service, however, for now, allow me to say this: I believe with heart and soul that 2025 will be a year when "the dam begins to burst" and we will begin to see incredible fruit for our labour here over many years.

Our 2025 Church Motto, found in **Galatians 6:9** reads: *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."*

So let us not become weary. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. He alone is our Hope. He alone is our Strength. He alone is our Prize. The reward for serving Jesus is serving Jesus.

Let us enter 2025 with hope-filled hearts, united in the desire and belief that God would move mightily in our midst, and Megain would continue to be a place where individuals, couples, families, streets and whole communities are transformed by Jesus Christ, becoming who they were created to be—and may we be continue to found faithful in allowing God to continue to write His story with the ink of our obedience. For with Jesus, the Best is Yet to Come!

Respectfully Submitted in the Service of Jesus the King,

*Rev Sammy Robinson*

Rev Sammy Robinson (Lead Pastor & Chairperson)