

KNOCK EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH TRUSTEES REPORT 2023

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”.
(Galatians 3:27-28)

In the words above, Paul is reminding us that while the church consists of all sorts of people, from all sorts of backgrounds and with all sorts of personalities, we are, in essence, “All one in Christ Jesus”. We can look back on 2023 in the life of Knock with much thankfulness.

Session was restored to its previous strength when Mr Paul Watson, elected ruling elder in November 2022, was ordained and installed at the evening service on Lord’s Day 12 February 2023. The service was held under the auspices of the appointed commission of presbytery (Rev Mark Johnston, Rev Andy Hambleton and Mr David Woolsey) and was led by Rev Andy Hambleton. Apologies were received from Rev narrative of events presented by Mr Wallace Thompson, the prescribed questions were put to Mr Watson by Mr David Woolsey, and Mr Watson then signed the declaration. During the laying on of hands, Mr Hambleton led in prayer. Mr Hambleton then preached the Word. After the service, a time of fellowship and supper was enjoyed by all. As a congregation we rejoice in this new chapter of our history.

The new Session met formally on 15 February, 21 March, 3 May, 3 August, 25 October and 29 November. In addition, we met regularly for prayer and a more informal time of fellowship. We also commenced a study of “A Good Work”, a book by David Watson, ruling elder in Ballyclare EPC, reflecting on the eldership in everyday life and ministry. Please give thanks for a good spirit of harmony and unity within Session and continue to pray for us.

We were saddened by the sudden passing of our brother Richard Hamilton on 20 January. Although in declining health, Richard had been faithful in attendance at Sunday worship and prayer meetings. The funeral took place on Saturday 28 January at 11am in Knock and was conducted by Rev Robert Johnston.

Communicant classes were held during 2023 and, as a result, Hannah Watson and Nathan Watson came into membership at the Lord’s Supper on Sunday morning, 3 December.

At the start of 2023, we continued our men’s and ladies Bible studies on 1 and 2 Timothy on alternate Wednesdays for a number of weeks, before reverting to our normal prayer meetings. Session decided to repeat this in the autumn with separate studies on Biblical Manhood and Biblical Womanhood.

Special services were held at different points throughout the year, with the aim of reaching out to the community. A Good Friday service was held in Knock on 7 April at 7pm and the congregation was boosted by the attendance of some friends from Connsbrook Congregational Church. Rev Robert Johnston was the preacher. In

advance of Christmas, we distributed CEF Christmas evangelistic leaflets and carol service invitations in Tullycarnet. Our carol service took place on Lord's Day 24 December at 5pm, and a service was held on Christmas morning at 10am.

Congregational fellowship was in evidence throughout the year, with people lingering behind long after the services of worship were over each Lord's Day. From September, we decided to replace the monthly evening supper with a smaller, weekly, supper. We also enjoyed another very successful Christmas meal in the church on 2 December and, once again, our thanks go to Michael Harrison and his team of helpers.

Attendances at morning services averaged 38 and evening services 31.

At the Presbytery Day Conference held in Crumlin EPC, on Saturday 13 May, Rev Robert Johnston was installed as EPC Moderator for 2023-24. Please pray for Robert as this places an additional workload upon him, both in chairing Presbytery and in visiting the various congregations.

For the first time in several years, our congregation was visited by a Commission of Presbytery. While this might sound a bit dramatic, it is simply a standing Presbytery arrangement whereby each congregation is visited periodically along the lines of Acts 15:36 where *"Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do"*. The Commission, consisting of Rev Mark Johnston, Mr Allister Lucas and Mr Mervyn Kelly, met with us on the evening of Thursday 23 November and their report, which was very positive and encouraging, was presented to Presbytery on Monday 5 February 2024.

As a Session, we want to place on record our indebtedness to all who play an active part in the life and witness of the congregation. Many are quietly serving in all sorts of ways, and we are very grateful to you. We also wish to thank our deacons, David Fairley and Peter McCullough, along with Paul in his ongoing role as Treasurer, for their diligence in attending to the practical needs of the church.

I close by reminding us of our congregational Mission Statement which says, *"Founded on the Word of God and centred on the Gospel of Jesus Christ our mission is to build up God's people in truth, in prayer and in fellowship, so that we can better reach the lost in our own community and across the world"*. Let us reflect upon that statement as we continue our work, with God's help and in His will, throughout 2024.

Wallace Thompson

On behalf of the Trustees of Knock EPC