



### **Greater Ballyclare Youth for Christ Chairpersons Report 2022-2023**

Good evening everyone and welcome to Greater Ballyclare Youth for Christ's annual celebration event. My name is Alan Blackwell and I am Chairperson of the Board. Before we start this evening I would just like to open in prayer.

As I said in my letter to you all, it is very difficult to believe that it is 12 months since our last celebration event, this year has absolutely flown by, we have much to reflect on, and much to thank God for, and we look forward to doing this throughout the course of this evening. I will not be saying anything about the youth work that takes place with the young people, and will leave this to the experts, but will be reflecting on our experiences as a Board.

As we start this evening I want to read a verse from Scripture. In Ecclesiastes chapter 3 the author Solomon reflects on the seasons of life. In verses 1-9, the list describes these different seasons, highlighting the more positive aspects of life as well as the much more. In verse 14 the author writes *"I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it that men should fear Him."*

As Solomon reflected on the changing times of life, we here at Greater Ballyclare Youth for Christ have also experienced seasons of change within our organization over the past 12 months, some good, some more challenging. Yet throughout all of this we have experienced a Heavenly Father who is constant and who is in sovereign control of these changes and whose plans and purposes are perfect. I just want to spend a few moments reflecting on these, some which have already occurred and some which are due to take place, but all which have had an impact on the life of GBYFC over the past 12 months.

GBYFC couldn't do what it does without a committed and creative staff team. We have Hayley as our Centre Co-ordinator. Hannah Rose and Danny as our full-time youth workers, Ian, Amy and Daniel as our part-time staff. We are so thankful for the ongoing work of all our staff, both full-time and part-time. Their gifts and abilities in developing relationships, running programmes and providing a safe and secure environment for the young people of Ballyclare is the reason that GBYFC has such an impact in our town. Yet, this year has been and continues to be a season of change for our staff team. Many of you will recall that last year we were delighted to have Kate McCoy as part of the team as our Schools Worker. Kate worked tirelessly in providing assemblies and programmes for some of the schools in the Greater Ballyclare area. This work was largely impacted by Covid, yet Kate's creativity and enthusiasm still shone through on video or in the classroom when she was able to go in to schools. Kate has now moved on to another post, and so the rest of the full-time staff are picking up the responsibilities that Kate once had.

Our full-time staff are under-pinned by the work of our part-time staff. Amy, Daniel and Ian are now all apart of the furniture at GBYFC. The young people have formed such positive relationships with them and see them in the same light as the full-time staff which is testament to their God given gifts and abilities. Yet like Kate, this is a season of change for our part-time staff. Amy Turner has now completed her studies at University and has been offered a full-time job elsewhere.

To say that Amy will be missed is an under-statement. Amy on behalf of the Board I want to thank you for your work and dedication to the work of GBYFC over these past 2 years. You will be missed, but we trust that God will bless you in the role that you have been lead to take. We are delighted that Daniel and Ian remain part of the team for the time being.

Finally when it comes to our staff, but by now means least, Hannah Rose. The eagled eyed among you will have noticed that Hannah Rose has put on a bit of weight recently!! The Board were delighted to hear of Hannah Rose's pregnancy a number of months ago. Hannah Rose will be going off on maternity leave before too much longer, and for the next number of months her focus will no longer be on putting out appealing facebook or Instagram posts, developing engaging programmes for the girls group or just being that bubbly presence during drop in, she will 100% be a full-time mum. Hannah Rose please be reassured of our prayers over these next weeks months. While maternity leave may seem to stretch a long way before you, please enjoy every moment of it, as it will go by in the blink of an eye. As a Board we look forward to seeing HR again at some stage in 2024.

I also want to publicly thank our volunteers. They willingly give up their time and to ensure that our drop in service can run in the evenings. As a Board we do not take this for granted and thank each and every volunteer for all that they do.

Nothing ever stays the same forever, God has different plans for us all, As change occur then new needs develop. As Kate has left, Amy is leaving and HR goes on maternity leave please pray for our staff team. Remember Hayley our centre manager and Danny our full-time worker as well as Daniel and Ian. Pray that God would equip them as they endeavour to meet the needs of the young people of Ballyclare, please also pray that God would call someone to this work, most likely on a temporary part time basis.

Secondly, many of you will recall that GBYFC have enjoyed the benefits of funding from the Education Authority over the past 3 years. This enabled the Board and staff to develop programmes and events that were appealing for our young people, whilst ensuring that there was sufficient staffing to run these programmes. Our staff were able to think outside the box and provide activities that wouldn't always have been the norm for GBYFC. After much thought and consideration the Board decided to apply for further funding for 2 more years. Much time was spent in completing this process, however, the bid was unsuccessful and the Education Authority chose to allocate their money elsewhere. Whilst disappointed this has given the Board and staff the opportunity to re-evaluate our priorities, to consider what works best for GBYFC and where we can best utilize the skills and abilities of our staff and volunteers. Later in the year we hope to our launch our vision document which will outline the future plans of GBYFC. We have also had cause to reflect on the promises held within God's word. In Matt 6 vs 31 & 32 it says "So do not worry, saying "What shall we eat" or "What shall we drink" or "What shall we wear"? For the pagans run after all these things, and your Heavenly Father knows that you need them." We have the reassurance that God knew the needs of GBYFC before the EA funding and he was faithful in providing for those needs, he provided for us in the EA funding and he remains faithful now and we trust and pray that God will bless the ongoing work of GBYFC in our town and will provide for all our needs, be that financial or otherwise.

GBYFC has been encouraged and blessed by the faithful giving of individuals and churches in supporting the work over many years now, and this leads me to say a huge thank you to those who provide support both prayerful and financial, especially as we live in such a challenging financial environment. It is our prayer that individuals and Churches will continue to feel lead to contribute

financially, prayerfully and practically in support of this work, as without these things, Our staff couldn't do what they do without the support they receive.

We have talked about EA, the staff team and finally the Board. Greater Ballyclare Youth for Christ has been blessed by Godly, humble and committed men and women who have given up their free time to discuss and direct the work of GBYFC, over many years. For those supporters who read the Board nomination slip, you will have noticed that while 2 Board members are stepping down, only one is standing for re-election. After 20+ years Fiona has decided to step down from her role as Treasurer and as a Board member. Fiona will be a huge loss to GBYFC as her wise counsel, work and wit will all be missed hugely by the Board. I don't think any of us fully realise the hours of work that Fiona has put in over the past years. She has stuck with it during tough times, when humanly speaking things could be described as 'grim' financially, she maintained her role as treasurer when we enjoyed the blessings of the EA funding – a role that the EA moderator was shocked was undertaken by a volunteer. Receiving e-mails from Fiona at 6am was not unusual. Fiona has been the cornerstone of the GBYFC Board and her absence will be hugely felt. Before we let her go we will have the "pleasure" of hearing Fiona's treasurers report one last time, but before she does this I just want to publicly thank Fiona for her years of service, and trust that God will continue to bless you in whatever you decide to do next!!

With Fiona having stepped down from the Board, GBYFC would really benefit from someone with the skills in managing our finances and being willing to take on this role, the but please don't feel this is the only role that is required within the Board. If you are enthusiastic, full of ideas (they don't even always have to be good) and have a desire and passion for the young people of the town then please speak to myself or any of the Board members and we would happily chat to you more about what is involved in being a Board member.

In conclusion, as a Board and staff team we are entering in to a new season of the work with further change ahead, we covet and welcome your, practical, prayerful and financial support. We trust that God will continue to use the work of Greater Ballyclare Youth for Christ in the lives of every single young person that our staff and volunteers come in to contact with.

Alan Blackwell

GBYFC Chairperson