



Ballywalter Presbyterian Church AGM - Kirk Session Report

Meeting held on Sunday 21st April 2024 at 12.15pm in the Church Building.

1. Kirk Session Report.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to present this report on behalf of Kirk Session. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Kirk Session meets to discuss the spiritual work of the church and to spread God's message among the people of this area.

The running theme of our report for 2023 reflects on normality within our weekly routine and a sense of excitement as our congregation and indeed our various clubs and groups continue to grow with new individuals and families joining the congregation of Ballywalter Presbyterian Church and sharing the life and witness of our church in Ballywalter village.

As a Kirk Session we met formally on fifteen occasions, and we are thankful for what we have been able to do throughout 2023 and for all the blessings that we have received throughout the year especially when considering the formation of our new Congregational Committee in late 2023.

As our numbers have continued to increase throughout the year it is heart-warming and encouraging to observe new faces getting actively involved in the day to day running of our Church in Ballywalter.

In May we held a special lunch following our Sunday Morning Service to recognise and thank Mr Trevor Urey for his many years of unwavering and dedicated service as an Elder in our congregation.

We had an exciting year for our young people with:

- New activities and leadership at our Sunday School.
- Bible Class continued to grow as individuals started a new chapter at secondary school.
- Youth Fellowship has also continued to grow with more young people attending.
- CSSM arrived in Ballywalter for a week in the summer, providing a range of activities for young people in the village, including those in the congregation as well as seasonal visitors.
- Our GB Company continued to grow and continues to develop a Christian ethos in our girls.
- The Parent & Toddler Group continued to grow and provided a great opportunity for fellowship in our congregation.
- Our Knit & Natter Group met regularly and contributed greatly to donating knitwear to much needed causes.

- Wednesday evenings saw the gathering of the Badminton Club which saw on average of 35 players attending, both primary school age and post primary age.
- Friday evenings saw the return of Youth Club for much fun including games and cooking which saw on average of over 30 kids attending, both primary school age and post primary age.

We have also facilitated a range of events and activities throughout the year including:

- On Saturday 25th March 2023, we hosted a special concert with the Belfast Community Gospel Choir which was a fun filled evening of praise and worship.
- Our Easter Dawn Service on Ballywalter Beach was a joyful start to Easter celebrations in April. We also met on Cloughey Beach for a picnic on Easter Monday.
- PW and the Young Women's Group had an event filled calendar throughout the year, providing another opportunity for mission, fundraising and fellowship.
- On Sunday 21st May 2023 we hosted a lunch event, following the service of worship, with all proceeds going to Christian Aid.
- On Sunday evening, 28th May 2023 we also hosted the Peninsula Pentecost Service.
- In August, we held our annual Tractor & Vintage Run which attracted a multitude of tractors and various vintage items which toured our local country roads, before arriving back at the Church for the much-anticipated barbeque.
- In October, a Men's Breakfast was organised and held in the village where many of the male members of our congregation met in Firebox Restaurant for a catch-up.
- Our annual Church Service on Remembrance Sunday was held on (Sunday 12th November). Our service commenced at the later time of 11:15am to facilitate a short service held at the village War Memorial prior to our Church Service.
- Our Christmas event this year took place on Saturday evening 18th December 2023 and involved a Christmas Social with music, dancing and games. This event was a huge success, because of the hard work and dedication of several members of our church family. The Kirk Session was very much encouraged and thankful by the interest shown in this event not only by our own congregation but also by the local community and beyond.
- Earlier in December on Advent Sunday, we hosted an evening service with the Peninsula Choir singing Carols and some Classics which was then followed by refreshments in the Church Hall.

Beyond our social witness and missional work, the more routine aspects of congregational life continued:

- In late August 2023 the Kirk Session formally accepted the resignation of Ms Diane Morrison from the role of Music Co-ordinator. We wish to acknowledge our thanks and gratitude to Diane for her time, dedication and hard work as Music Co-ordinator leading the worship praise in Ballywalter over the last seven years. Diane's final service leading our worship praise was on Sunday 8th October 2023.
- Four infants and one adult, along with their parents took part in the sacrament of baptism in 2023.

- 143 individuals who are included on the Communion Roll attended at least one communion service during the year.
- We held our special Sunday services at Easter, Harvest and at Christmas time. We were blessed to have our choir and praise group in place once more, for these services which was most encouraging and enjoyable. We wish to thank Mrs Briar Kennedy for her hard work and dedication in leading and developing the choir in preparation for these special services at harvest and during the Christmas Period. Our Christmas tree Service was held on the 4th of December and donations were accepted for Flourish NI.
- Our annual Christmas Children's Service and evening Carol Service took place on Sunday 17th December.
- All Age Services took place at different times throughout the year and were very much enjoyed by all.
- Finally, we confirmed and welcomed the members of our new Congregational Committee in late December, however the new Committee would not officially be in place until early 2024.

Now in my second full year, as Clerk of Session, we look forward to our future as a Church family with great hope and optimism as we maintain and enhance our place in the middle of our village and community as "An active presence for Jesus Christ."

Through 2023 it was evident and encouraging that our congregation is growing monthly and it is indeed exciting as we continue to live out our vision through mission and fellowship in our community and much further afield.

Promises from God's heart for our future is noted in Jeremiah Chapter 29, verse 11:

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

We look forward with excitement, but at the same time with some trepidation, especially for members of our church family who are suffering with their daily challenges for various reasons. Through prayer we will work through any uncertainty and challenges that the future may bring.

As a Church our primary aim is to bring people to Christ and to develop them spiritually. We as a Kirk Session cannot do this solely on our own, but instead we require the support and dedication of our Congregational Committee and all members of our congregation to help fulfil this primary objective.

This concludes the annual report from the Kirk Session for 2023.

Moderator..... Date.....

Clerk of Session..... Date.....