

## 2023 Kirk Session Report

As we review 2023, we express our gratitude to the living Lord for His gracious and bountiful provision. The Lord has been consistently merciful and generous and so we want to continually give the glory to Him – the Lamb upon the throne.

Raffrey has suffered bereavement throughout the year and we are continually mindful of those who carry the burden of loss we want to remember them daily at God's Throne of grace.

Our God, the living God brings to His people gladness and joy and numerous blessings - "new every morning and fresh every evening". We come to Him every day with heartfelt thanks giving.

Many serve in Raffrey in so many ways each Sunday, through Prayer, as organists, in the choir or praise group, in welcoming us to the service, by providing the announcements and operating the sound and vision, ensuring the building is warm and clean, bringing the gifts of flowers and preparing the meeting house for special occasions and coming together to worship.

Each week we encourage people of all ages to be here for teaching and worship at both morning and evening services, Sunday school, Crèche, Children's Church or Thrive.

We thank our minister Rev Brian Small for teaching us faithfully Sunday morning and evening, in Midweek, and for his diligent preparation. We commend our minister and the manse family to you and urge that we as a congregation continually uphold them and all who lead in the work of the congregation and its organisations in prayer.

We were very pleased to welcome everyone back to worshipping together in 2023 and pleased that so many of our congregation join to worship each week.

January saw past leaders of the Tuesday Afternoon Fellowship being treated to a meal at French's to thank them for their dedicated service over the years. Meetings continued to be well-attended, with the gospel faithfully presented by our guest singers and speakers. We gratefully recognise the quiet work of the ladies in the catering team for their vital contribution to this ministry. A presentation was made to Mr William Jackson at the December meeting to mark his role as founder of the Fellowship; his foresight and commitment in starting this work are very much appreciated throughout the church and wider community.

The winter session got under way in September with the commencement of Girls Brigade and Boys Brigade. These organisations are indeed a unique and privileged opportunity to present the gospel to many precious children and young people. The Boys Brigade and Girls Brigade numbers have grown to 200, this is indeed testimony to the work and faithfulness of the leaders. The Brigades packed the church for their combined Enrolment service on 19<sup>th</sup> November.

The church and Girls Brigade marked a milestone as Mrs May Ross retired after 25 years faithful and dedicated service as Captain.

Session appointed Miss Alison Ross as GB Captain from September. We wish Alison God's blessing and success as she leads the company.

At the end of October we again met to give thanks to God for His abundant Harvest; we had the privilege of being ministered to by two ministers from Presbytery, from

Lissara Rev Alan Burke on Sunday evening and Rev Andrew Conway from 2<sup>nd</sup> Comber on Harvest Monday night.

The new Congregational Committee took up office in May 2023 Thanks to all who served on committee over the previous 4 years and we warmly welcome new members as well as faithful members returning to serve.

The Representative Elder to Presbytery was Billy McClements and Associate Elder Mervyn Murdock. The Representative Elder to the General Assembly was Mervyn Murdock.

The Outreach Committee sought to build on the work of 2018. With 2 Church lunches, "Country Folk" concert hosted by Rev Small, Coronation weekend special, a church barbeque, the Raffrey Bake off, and an all age social. Further activities are planned for 2024 including a Christianity Explored series after Easter.

Please make every effort to attend these events and remember them prayerfully.

It is a great sign for the future to have 3 new Sunday school teachers in September and 9 new leaders were Access NI approved.

A Book club commenced in October led by Matthew Jackson.

### Presbytery Consultation

The Presbytery consultation replaces what was previously referred to as "Presbytery Visitation". Presbytery informed the minister and congregation of their intention to engage in a consultation with Raffrey in 2023. This involved research, analysis and detailed reporting to a presbytery commission by Session and Committee on all aspects of the congregation. This included the spiritual life of the church and its organisations, its numerical and financial strength,

the quality of relationships within the congregation, and its organisations and their harmonious relations and inter relationship. Focus was also placed on our outreach activities, prayer life, vision for the work in Raffrey and our commitment and support of PCI mission.

The process concluded at the end of November with the commission interviews of our minister and congregation representatives, who were drawn from a wide age range, representative of the whole church.

The commission are due to report back to Presbytery at their February meeting.

May we with devotion continue to live for the Lord as we serve Him in our personal and family lives but also within the context of congregational life.

The cultivation of the prayer life both personal and corporate is essential.

Praise and worship and listening to the preached word are vital components within the sphere of congregational life. Let us show forth the life changing difference that The Lord Jesus Christ makes to our living and outlook on life.