

Dromore Reformed Presbyterian Church

Independent Examiner's Report 2024



Independent Examiner's Report for Dromore Reformed Presbyterian Church
for the year ended 31st December 2024.

Charity Details

Dromore Reformed Presbyterian Church
14 Brewery Lane, Dromore, Co.Down, BT25 1AH

Charity Registration Number: NIC106256

Charity Trustees

Rev Philip Dunwoody
Dr Raymond Steen
Mr Raymond Gamble

Principal Office Bearers

Minister	Rev Philip Dunwoody
Session	Dr Raymond Steen + Mr Raymond Gamble
Deacon/Secretary	Dr Gareth McKeeman
Deacon/Treasurer	Dr Alan Ball
Deacons	Mr Gavin McCaughan + Mr Brian Rankin Mr Stephen Hawthorne + Mr Timothy Frazer

Independent Examiner Mr William McCollum FCA

DROMORE SESSION REPORT 2024

Dromore Session gives thanks and glory to God for his sustaining grace in the last twelve months. In the course of the year we considered the words of Psalm 31:15, *My times are in your hand*; we are freshly thankful for this precious truth.

Session

Session met on eight occasions during the year. The spiritual needs of the congregation were prayerfully considered and Session made plans to continue regular pastoral visitation. Session also gave thought and prayer to the regular preaching of the Word and opportunities for outreach.

At the May meeting of the Eastern Presbytery Mr John Somerville was relieved of duty as an interim elder in Dromore. Session records its thanks for John's invaluable service over the course of several years and for the hospitality he and his wife, Jennifer, offered in regularly hosting Session meetings in their home.

Prayer

A Day of Fasting and Prayer was once again held at the beginning of the New Year. Church members were encouraged to participate in prayer times, either in person or by Zoom, on Saturday 6th January. A regular programme of midweek prayer times, as well as evening prayer meetings on the Lord's Day, continued throughout the year. Session urges members to make every effort to meet regularly to pray for our congregation's needs as well as the wider church and nation.

Worship

Lord's Day morning and evening worship services were held weekly throughout the year. Average morning attendance in 2024 was 53 – identical to 2023 – with a high of 64 and a low of 30. Average evening attendance increased slightly from 35 in 2023 to 39 in 2024, with a high of 64 and a low of 12. Attendances at monthly evening guest services were encouraging. Session commends members for their commitment to the means of grace; an increasing number of children at evening services has been a blessing.

a) Preaching & Short-Term Service Worker

Rev. Dunwoody completed another segment of the Book of Genesis, covering chapters 25-36 in 15 sermons. Mr Gareth Orr, a member of the Ballenon congregation and under care of the Southern Presbytery, spent 3 months in Dromore undertaking short-term service. Mr Orr preached 6 sermons, 4 of them as part of the Genesis series. The congregation was blessed by Mr Orr's preaching ministry. He also met regularly with our teaching pastor and had opportunities to lead midweek Bible study and prayer times. Session continues to uphold Mr Orr and his family in prayer as he studies at Reformed Theological College, Belfast.

Mr Dunwoody also preached 14 sermons on Proverbs chapters 1-9; the Book of Nahum in 4 sermons; 21 sermons on the Sermon on the Mount; and Psalms 31-34. A monthly series, "Reformed & Presbyterian", began in September.

Mr Dunwoody took 5 pulpit supplies and 6 weeks of holiday.

b) Sacraments

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was observed on 4 occasions during the year (10th March, 9th June, 1st September and 1st December). An average of 35 members partook of the Sacrament, an increase of 3 from 2023. Communion Preparation Services were held on the preceding Friday evenings in March, June and August and on the preceding Wednesday of the December service. Ahead of the September Communion season Session took the decision to observe the Lord's Supper on the first Sabbaths of March, June, September and December, rather than the second, in an effort to avoid congested weeks when Presbytery or Synod meetings take place.

c) Psalmody

Session records its thanks to the precentors, Mrs Lynsey McKeeman, Mr Stephen Hawthorne and Mrs Barbara Gamble for raising the singing. We are also thankful to Mr Ian Groves, a member of Rathfriland who often worships with us on Sabbath evenings, who also raised the singing regularly. Session is also grateful to Miss Jessica Gamble and Mrs Hannah Dunwoody who have precented on occasion.

Midweek Meetings

Prayer meetings, preceded by Scripture exposition and singing, were generally held in Brewery Lane on first and third Wednesdays each month. We also had mission update meetings from Kids4School and European Mission Fellowship (EMF). Monthly Home Groups, consisting of Bible study, prayer and fellowship, continued throughout the year with a break during the summer months and holiday times. Session is encouraged by the good number of members who offer to host home groups.

Fellowship Meetings

A weekly Body and Soul meeting (Mondays), a monthly Men's Fellowship (Tuesdays), and a monthly Ladies' Fellowship (Thursdays) continue to be a source of encouragement and blessing. Session records its thanks to those members who contribute to the organisation and success of the fellowship meeting programmes.

Session also records thanks to Mr Stephen & Mrs Jennifer Hawthorne for hosting a delicious church barbecue on Friday 21st June and for organising an outing to Cultra Folk Park, followed by a meal in Dromore High School, on Saturday 21st September.

Outreach

a) Guest Services

A series of four guest services was held in the spring on the theme, 'The Cross in Four Words.' An average of 49 people attended these services, with an encouraging number of young people included.

Guest services resumed in the autumn on the theme, 'Have You Ever Wondered...?' Once again attendances were encouraging, with an average of 52 at the three meetings.

b) GO Team

In August the congregation hosted a GO Team for the first time in several years. A team of three young people, as well as several of our own members and day visitors, distributed over 3,000 invitations to worship and Hope Explored to every home in Dromore as well as outlying areas in Donaghcloney, Gamblestown and Blackskull. The team also held a time of open-air psalm singing in Dromore town centre and visited residents in Mountvale Nursing Home. Session records thanks to those who participated and to members who provided beds and meals for the week.

c) Hope Explored

The congregation ran Hope Explored on three consecutive Wednesdays, 25th September, 2nd & 9th October, in a local Christian-run café, Aroma. We were delighted to welcome three guests each week. Contact continues with one man from Hope Explored and with others who attended our guest services.

d) Mountvale Nursing Home

Monthly Lord's Day visits, consisting of psalm-singing, Scripture reading and a short address, continued.

e) Lunch Group

The Thursday lunch for seniors was held several times throughout the year, with an outing to Newcastle in June; Session appreciates the work of Mrs Isabel Patterson, and the other members who serve, in coordinating the lunch group.

f) Online Witness

Streaming of services and publication of sermons via social media continues in an effort to promote the gospel both locally and around the world.

Session commends members who have participated, whether practically or in other ways, with our outreach efforts throughout the year.

Other Ministries

a) Sabbath School & Children's Sermon Sheet

Session appreciates the commitment of the teachers (Dr Elizabeth Ball, Dr Gareth McKeeman, Mr Stephen Hawthorne, Mrs Catherine Rankin) in preparing and teaching the lessons. Session gives thanks for the ongoing work of our superintendent, Dr Gareth McKeeman.

Session is grateful to Mr Stephen Hawthorne for preparing a worksheet and sermon notes for children to use during morning services.

b) Adult Bible Class

Mr Raymond Gamble continued to teach a small group on Lord's Day mornings. A video series from Ligonier on the Fear of God was completed. Session encourages more members, of all ages, to attend the weekly term-time Bible Class.

c) Covenanter Youth

The Joint CY with Dromara, Lisburn and Bailiesmills continues to be a fruitful ministry for our secondary school-aged children. Session records its appreciation for the work of all the leaders.

Pastoral Visitation

Session visited the majority of members and families in 2024 and will endeavour to visit all members in 2025.

Membership Changes

A disjunction certificate was granted to Mrs Lynda Agnew (née Bell) in September. Session was delighted to welcome Miss Charlotte Gamble into full communicant membership upon profession of faith in December. Mrs Eilidh Gamble and Mrs Hazel Walsh also became members upon disjunction from Glasgow RP Church and Donaghcloney Presbyterian Church respectively. Session congratulates Mr Cameron & Mrs Eilidh Gamble upon their marriage in August.

Diaconate

Session is thankful for the work the deacons have carried out during the year, particularly with the ongoing arrangements for Sabbath School, morning worship and guest services being held in Dromore High School. Session also thanks the deacons for seeing to the practicalities around running Hope Explored in Aroma Café.

The congregation continues to wait patiently for a response from the Council to our plans for extensive renovation of the Brewery Lane Meeting House.

Following discussion and prayer the Session and Diaconate agreed to commence ongoing support for Mr João Cid, his family and his congregation in Lousã, Portugal. Mr Cid is a missionary with EMF. It was a joy to welcome him to Dromore in December. The congregation looks forward to seeing how this 'gospel partnership' will develop, God willing.

Student for Gospel Ministry

Our Clerk of Session, Mr Raymond Gamble, expressed a strong sense of call to gospel ministry to Rev. Dunwoody in June. With the support of Session Mr Gamble was taken under care of the Eastern Presbytery as a student for gospel ministry in August. Mr Gamble has completed his first term of study at Reformed Theological College, Belfast. Session, along with the congregation, remembers Mr Gamble and his family in constant prayer, mindful of the sacrifices and hard work this demands of him.

Conclusion

Session gives thanks for the Lord's sustaining of our fellowship and witness throughout 2024. We pray, in the words of Colossians 1:10, that as a congregation we would *walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...* (ESV)

Dromore Session