

Cookstown RP Society Session Report

2020

The interim session of Cookstown RP Society met 12 times in the year and the Commission, comprising of Mervyn Green and Gregg Somerville, met on 3 occasions to celebrate the Lord's Supper and also for the baptism of Isaiah John Sloan.

The year 2020 started busily and eagerly by the Cookstown Church Family. On the Lord's Day we continued our studies in Genesis, 'He Blessed Them', in both the morning and evening services. We thank the Lord for all about which He spoke to us in this series. In June we began a new series 'The Unfocused Church Family' from 1 Corinthians. Our practice of singing through the Psalter on the Lord's Day morning and evenings and our consecutive Scripture reading also continued this year.

This has been a difficult year for all of God's people and the Session commends Cookstown Church family for their enthusiasm for gathering to worship the Lord. Due to lockdown restrictions from March, we held online teaching on Sabbath mornings and evenings via livestream app Periscope. In June we were able to hold Drive-in Worship Services on the Lord's Day morning and evening, and from July we were back together in the church building once more worshipping the Lord. In 2020, more than in any other year, we have learned to cherish the gathering of the saints in worship of the Lord. We pray this lesson will not be soon forgotten.

As is our normal practice we continued our mid-week Bible study by going over one or both of the previous Sabbath's sermons. These continue to be great times of open and honest discussion even with the location change to the church building, instead of it being held in members' homes. At the beginning of the year, it was decided that we would spend the final Thursday evening of each month handing out Gospels around the doors instead of our normal mid-week meeting. We also began distributing gospels round houses on the first Saturday morning of each month. Due to initial restrictions, these outreach times have fallen by the wayside, but it is our desire to start this up again soon and we pray that the Lord would bless his Word as it goes out into our needy town.

Men's and women's fellowship continued, with our men's group reading Kent Hughes "*Disciplines of a Godly Man*" and the women's fellowship studying Jerry Bridges "*Respectable Sins*". We praise the Lord for these times of open and honest discussion and fellowship.

On 29th February 2020 we held a "Let them Live" Youth Training event in the afternoon and in the evening hosted the "End Abortion Now" Conference. Both events were blessed by the Lord and all who attended were deeply challenged and moved to stand for the King of kings in this His land.

Sadly, on 16th January 'Mid Ulster Pride' was launched in the Royal Hotel, Cookstown. The Cookstown church family joined other churches in the area outside the Hotel to protest against this celebration of the breaking of the 7th Commandment. We praise the Lord for the Gospels of John that were accepted on that night. Further events were promoted by 'Mid Ulster Pride' on this launch evening but were postponed or cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions. A scaled down version of the first Rural Pride event did go ahead in September. Some of the church family joined with the Free Presbyterians in witnessing at this event by handing out some Gospels of John and our FP brothers preached the gospel clearly and lovingly. We had also planned an outreach evening in April called 'Is God

homophobic?’ with Rev Warren Peel as our main speaker but it was thought best to cancel this at the time.

In God’s kind providence, there have been additional blessings, even due to Covid-19. In the first lockdown we had the opportunity to offer meal deliveries and grocery and prescription collection services to the vulnerable in our community. During the lockdown of Winter 2020/2021 we were able to collaborate with other local churches in an initiative called REACH (organized by Molesworth Presbyterian Church) to offer further practical assistance to those who are lonely or isolating. Our pastor, Paul, also began weekly street preaching on Friday afternoons where he was joined by some members of the church family. Session would especially like to thank Henry Greer for his efforts on these afternoons, as he sought to offer the Gospel of John to passers-by and seeking also to speak to them about the wonderful things of the Lord.

We have had new and regular visitors to our worship services, three of whom are not yet saved. God gave us an amazing opportunity to serve a Syrian family who had moved to Cookstown in December 2019. They contacted us via Facebook wanting to learn English, and this led to our English classes starting up again. It has been a real pleasure getting to know this family and we pray that in time the Lord will mercifully save them.

The year ended with joy on 27th December with the baptism of Isaiah John Sloan who was born on 24th November. We praise the Lord for this additional gift from heaven to the Sloan family and our own church family and we pray the Lord will bless Roger and Lydia as they seek to bring up their four children in the ways of the Lord.

Paul has continued to have opportunities to take school assemblies at Coagh Primary school, and online assembly in November for Cookstown High School. In the month of February he had opportunity to hold worship services on Lord’s Day mornings in Westland Nursing home and we pray the Lord would be pleased to use the Word preached in these areas of Mid-Ulster.

Respectfully Submitted

Marcus McCollum (Prepared by Paul Wright)