



Trustees Report 2023

Trustees report for Ballyclare Reformed Presbyterian Church for the year ended 31st December 2023.

Charity Details

Ballyclare Reformed Presbyterian Church
Ballycorr Road
Ballyclare
County Antrim
BT39 9DD

Charity Registration Number: NIC106337

Charity Trustees

Mr Steven Bell
Mr Alan Blackwell
Mr Thomas Ferguson
Rev Nathan Hawthorne
Mr Keith McKeeman
Mr Jonathan Stewart
Mr George Wright

Principal office bearers

Minister	Rev Nathan Hawthorne
Clerk of Session	Mr Steven Bell
Treasurer	Mr Andrew Morrison
Congregational Secretary	Mr Richard Chestnutt

Independent examiner

Mr William McCollum

We thank God for every member, adherent and child who makes up the church family at Ballyclare RP Church and for every opportunity we had over the course of 2023 to worship our awesome God and to serve him amongst our congregation and our community.

SESSION

Session met regularly throughout the year for the purposes of overseeing the work of the congregation and its members and adherents.

As well as the oversight of the congregation and its members and work, members of Session took it in turn to attend the meetings of the Eastern Presbytery and the meeting of Synod that was held in Trinity in June.

DEACONS

The Deacons continued their work in managing the finances and property of the congregation and in overseeing the mercy ministry of the congregation, showing love and mercy to the church family and to those in need in Ballyclare and beyond.

SABBATH SERVICES

Sabbath morning and evening services continued at 11.00 am every Sabbath morning and 6.00 pm on the 2nd and 4th Sabbath evenings of the month.

Over the year our pastor preached a number of series:

- Hebrews
- Hallel Psalms – Psalms 113-118
- The parables of Matthew 25
- I need an answer – seeking to answer various questions people may have about God, faith, Christianity e.g. How can a God of love send people to hell? Who is Jesus – Mythical, moraliser, maniac, malevolent or messiah? Is there life after death? Can't we leave the bible's attitude to sex in the dark ages where it belongs?

He also preached a number of stand-alone sermons suited to particular situations in our country or calendar or the needs of our church:

- Mark 12:28-34 – Your greatest priority this year (Start of the new year)
- Psalm 72 – Long live the king (Coronation of King Charles III)
- 1 John 3:1 – Children of God (Footsteps Service)
- Hebrews 10:24-25 – Christians Assemble
- Romans 12:5 – We are members of one another
- HMS Church (Mission Sabbath)
- Matthew 5:8 – The Pure shall see God
- Luke 1:26-56 – God's humble Servants
- 1 Samuel 7:12 – Ebenezer, Remembering God's help (end of the year)

The sermons continue to be made available on the congregation's Youtube channel and advertised on Facebook.

SACRAMENTS

The congregation celebrated the Lord's Supper in February, June and October.

For our communion season in February we studied Mark 15v21-32.

For our communion season in June we studied Hebrews 10.

The theme for our communion season in October was 'The lamb'.

The sacrament of baptism was administered on one occasion in 2023.

PASTORAL CARE

As with past years many of our members and adherents suffered ill health / difficulties over the course of the year. We give thanks to God for his sustaining grace and for his many answers to prayer in this regard.

During the autumn / winter months pastoral visits were made to over half the congregation.

Members of the congregation continued to serve the community both in an individual capacity and in the support of wider community groups.

OUTREACH

Our congregation seeks to share and relate the hope of the message of the gospel with those around us in various ways:

- By living out our Christian lives as individuals before family, friends, neighbours and the community of Ballyclare.
- By inviting people to our church services, youth work and other church activities.
- By engaging with the community as individuals and through our Friendship Group, our monthly nursing home services, the offer of group or personal bible study courses etc.

On the week prior to the coronation of King Charles III tracts were delivered to homes in the town on a coronation theme.

In December, 140 books entitled 'Christmas Uncut' were handed out in and around the town square on a Saturday morning. Invites to a Hope Explored course were included inside the books.

Another 60 books and invites to a Hope Explored course were delivered to homes in the immediate vicinity of the church building in packets including tea-bags, sachets of coffee, sachets of sugar and packets of shortbread.

PRAYER & BIBLE STUDY

The times of congregational prayer before morning and evening services continued in 2023.

On Thursday evening the prayer meeting continued to meet in person and on Zoom over the course of the year.

The ladies and men's fellowship met monthly throughout the year both in person and over Zoom for bible study, prayer, and fellowship.

MISSION

The congregation has a monthly missionary meeting on the 1st Sabbath evening of each month to which representatives of missionary organisations are invited to bring updates on the work of their organisations.

The missionaries / missionary organisations invited to bring updates on their work included Sports Academy, George; CEF, Belfast; Exeter Chinese Church; Dublin Christian Mission; Asia Link; International Mission to Jewish People; Messianic Testimony; Reach Beyond; One Another Ministry; Peru; Seafarers' Christian Friend Society; Blythswood.

At our annual missionary service in November we launched a partnership with a pastor in Ruse, Bulgaria who is supported by EMF.

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Three meetings were organised in November on a number of mental health matters. Local churches, friends and contacts were invited to join and hear experienced speakers address a range of topics:

Thursday 9th November: Understanding and interacting with mental health issues – Ken Yeow, consultant psychiatrist within the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust.

Thursday 16th November: Anxiety – Tim Huey, General Practitioner in Templepatrick.

Thursday 23rd November: Suffering – Brenda Kelso, Christian counsellor.

FELLOWSHIP

The usual times of fellowship enjoyed by the congregation over the course of the year include:

- On Sabbath evenings a time of supper and fellowship is enjoyed after the evening service.
- Throughout the year a number of congregational meals are held following the morning service.
- Annual social events held during the course of the year included the barbecue in June and the Candlelight Supper in December.

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Men of the congregation meet on the 3rd week of the month for times of Bible Study and Prayer and fellowship. These meetings took place both in person and over Zoom.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

The Women's Fellowship meet on the 3rd week of the month for times of Bible Study and Prayer and fellowship. These meetings took place both in person and over Zoom. In June the ladies enjoyed a meal in Ballyclare Golf Club and in November the ladies went to the local Blythswood depot to help sort shoeboxes for Blythswood's annual Christmas shoebox appeal.

NURSING HOME SERVICES

Our pastor continues, along with other pastors in the area, to provide services in 3 local nursing homes.

FRIENDSHIP GROUP

The Friendship Group meets on the last Tuesday morning of each month, from January to May and September to November.

The group is made up of retirees within the congregation and the community who meet once a month for friendship and fellowship.

An invited speaker delivers a talk on a subject of interest after which a 3-course lunch is served.

The topics and speakers in 2023 were as follows:

- January Contents of a Glass Jar – A Korean Love Story (Mrs Etta Mann)
- February Overcoming Disability – Frances Brown, Blind Poetess of Ulster (Rev Raymond Blair)
- March Digging for Treasure (Mrs Nancy McCollum)
- April Old Ballyclare (Mrs Lindy Reid)
- September Outreach Cafes in Various Countries (Mr George Wright)
- October A Journey Through Asia (Mr and Mrs Scott)
- November West Belfast (Miss Naomi Dudgeon)

The average attendance for the six meetings was twenty-nine.

In May for the annual outing the Friendship Group visited the Carrickfergus Museum.

FOOTSTEPS

Footsteps is the title for our Sabbath School, attended by young people from within our congregation and from the community.

Footsteps meets on Sabbath mornings at 10.00 am before the morning service.

As well as the classes on Sabbath mornings the young people enjoyed a number of social evenings and an outing to Clip N Climb at Dundonald.

Once again in November the children filled shoeboxes for Blythswood's annual shoebox appeal, this year filling 43 shoeboxes to send to people in situations of need.

CY (COVENANTER YOUTH)

The junior and senior CYs, comprising young people from both within the congregation and outside the congregation meet together socially once a month on a Saturday evening, and then meet separately as junior and senior groups on the third Lord's Day of every month for a time of Bible study.

Junior CY is for young people in Years 8-10. Senior CY is for young people in Years 11+.

Over the course of the year social activities included ten-pin bowling, a board games evening in the church hall, a sports evening in the sports hall of another congregation, and games nights in facilities provided by a family within the congregation.

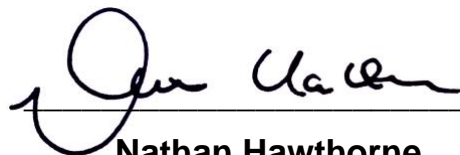
JAM (JESUS AND ME)

JAM, comprising children in Primary 1 to 7, meets on the first Saturday evening of the month.

The meetings consist of some games, followed by a memory verse, craft, story and some treats.

Approved by the Trustees at a meeting on 10th September 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

Minister



Nathan Hawthorne

Clerk



Steven Bell