

## SESSION REPORT 2021

### Public Worship

We give thanks to God that we were able to meet for public worship throughout the year and we were able to reintroduce Sabbath evening services in March. We were also able to increase the number of Psalms sung during our worship services in June from two to three. Towards the end of the year we were able to move from using the Psalm recordings that had been made to having precentors.

The online ministry continued throughout the year with services broadcast on the congregation's YouTube Channel for the benefit of those who were unable to attend.

There was a desire within the congregation last year to return to having everyone worship in the church building at the same time. That desire has been realised, in part, with evening services now being held solely in the church building. We trust and pray that before too much longer we will be able to return to having both morning and evening services in the same building.

Our pastor Rev. Raymond Blair has again preached the Word of God faithfully each week and has sought to provide pastoral care to members of the congregation.

We thank [REDACTED] for her ongoing work in scheduling YouTube livestreams and for all that she does to ensure that the modern means of communication for the spread of the gospel are utilised as fully as possible.

We thank [REDACTED] for continuing to produce the Psalm recordings that were used in worship each week until we returned to live precenting. These recordings were a great asset in our worship whilst we were required to sing quietly using masks. We thank our precentors [REDACTED] for their willingness

to present the Psalms which allows Rev. Blair unrestricted choice of Psalms to supplement and reinforce the message from the sermon or children's address.

The average attendance at our morning services was 56 and at our evening services 38.

### **Midweeks**

At the start of the year our midweeks were held using Zoom and we completed the study on Jonah. Representatives from Galway were able to join with us during one of our meetings to update us on the work being undertaken there.

We returned to 'in person' meetings in April. We watched online 'Counter Culture' talks by David Platt and were able to break into smaller groups for discussion and prayer. We also held a further 'Q & A with Pastor Ray' evening and we used the study book "Decisions: Seeking God's Guidance" by Donald Baker. We also joined a Zoom call hosted by the Relief Committee which informed us of various ministries in which the denomination is engaged. We welcomed [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who respectively spoke on the work of EMF and AsiaLink.

The prayer meetings which had initially taken place on Saturday mornings were moved to Sabbath mornings to coincide with the Sabbath School when it restarted in April. The prayer meetings before the evening service were restarted in early September.

### **Session**

Session was constituted on 13 occasions during the year and was represented at the 'virtual' Presbytery and Synod meetings.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was observed on three occasions, in March, May and September. The attendance was 41 in March, 46 in May and 44 in September. One home communion was also observed.

On 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021 we were saddened by the death of our senior member [REDACTED]. Aged 95, [REDACTED] had been a lifelong member of the congregation and was seldom absent from the public worship services despite the frailty of advancing years. He loved the Lord and was keen to witness for Him. To his family circle, both within and beyond the congregation, and especially to [REDACTED] who tended to him with selfless devotion in his latter years, we extend our heartfelt sympathies.

In March a letter was issued to the congregation explaining the rationale behind the decisions taken by Session in response to the pandemic as it unfolded from March 2020 onwards.

It was a delight to welcome [REDACTED] into membership in the congregation in May and we trust that they will both enjoy rich spiritual blessing in the congregation and that the congregation will be greatly blessed as they use their gifts in the Lord's service.

The sacrament of baptism was observed on three occasions. In September, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] presented their son [REDACTED] to be baptised. In October, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] presented their son [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] presented their daughter [REDACTED] for baptism. We trust that the Lord will bless these children and their parents and that the children will grow up to know and love the Lord and walk in His ways.

Pastoral visitation recommenced in October and we are seeking to review how members coped with the pandemic and assess what support they got, or didn't get, from Session and from other members of the congregation and what lessons can be learnt.

Session also continued with special meetings for the elders to study and pray together. It has also for an interim period taken over the running of the Men's Fellowship in pursuit of the following goals that were identified:-

1. To generate real friendships that will lead to mutual respect, honesty and accountability, where our faith and God's word is a major topic and where helping and encouraging one another towards godliness is natural;
2. To study God's word together regularly and get serious about how it applies in the world in which we live; and
3. To pray together as men who lead in the Church, home and society in general.

A breakfast was held in the Drummond Hotel, Ballykelly in September and several further meetings of the men's fellowship took place before the end of the year.

### **Evangelistic Efforts**

The Friendship Group had its first meeting since March 2020 when it held its annual Christmas Dinner in the Drummond Hotel in Ballykelly in December. Despite the sudden emergence of the Omicron version of Covid-19 and the threat from storm Barra, 31 members braved the elements to enjoy a meal, social interaction and a brief message on 'Feasts in the Bible' from Rev. Blair. It is planned to recommence the regular meetings of the group in February 2022.

The congregation has provided financial support to SU for [REDACTED], the full-time SU worker for the North West, and [REDACTED] has been appointed to liaise with [REDACTED] to keep the congregation up to date with her work.

Support has also been provided for [REDACTED], for the challenging work that she is undertaking in Sports Academy, George, South Africa. It was a delight to have [REDACTED] speak on her time working there and how the Lord has helped her in the various ministries in which she is engaged as well as the challenges that are faced.

Financial Support has also been provided for the Butterfly Home, the Relief Fund, Middle East Reformed Fellowship, E.M.F, AsiaLink, Roe Valley Christian Radio, Light & Hope, Barnabas, M.A.F., Spud Bear, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Christian Institute, Our Daily Bread

Ministries and Anagraha R. P. Church as well as for the students undergoing training at the Theological College.

The production of a Welcome Leaflet is at an advanced stage and it is hoped that this will be printed and available for distribution in the near future.

Copies of the tract by Roger Carswell, "Hope Beyond the Coronavirus" and the book entitled "Where is God in the Coronavirus World" were also made available to members to distribute as appropriate.

### **Congregational Activities**

The Sabbath School also met during the year and we thank the teachers for the work that they do in instructing the young. We thank [REDACTED] for her contribution to its work over several years and we thank [REDACTED] for agreeing to take over her class.

Despite the uncertainties when arranging meetings the Women's Fellowship managed to undertake a fairly full programme of meetings, using technology where necessary, but also having a number of 'in person' events and meetings.

[REDACTED] moved to Carryduff around of the middle of the year. We thank God for all the service that they rendered to the Lord in the congregation over many decades. We will miss them dearly and wish them every blessing as they attend Knockbracken Reformed Presbyterian Church.

[REDACTED] moved to Donemana in the summer. We are thankful to God for the contribution that they too made to the congregation in different aspects of its ministries and we wish them God's blessing in their new home.

The need for a new group to cater for the increasing number of children in the congregation was identified and plans are underway for this group to start early in the new year.

## **General**

We thank the Deacons for the work that they did throughout the year and in particular Mr [REDACTED] for his work as treasurer. We would also thank [REDACTED] for his work throughout the year in revising the seating arrangements from time to time.

We thank the members of the congregation for their generous contribution to the congregation's finances.

Despite the difficulties that were encountered during the year we give thanks to God for watching over us and keeping us safe and we look to Him for blessing in the year that lies ahead.

We would thank all those who have served the Lord in the congregation during the year in whatever capacity or role, "Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain."

Respectfully submitted,

Raymond Blair (Moderator)

Neville Kerr (Clerk of Session)