

Carrickfergus Session Report to the Eastern Presbytery for Year 2022

“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth!” Psalm 46:10.

1) We give thanks for the many ways our triune God has led and blessed us. Throughout the vacancy the Word has been faithfully ministered to us week by week by gifted men, feeding our souls, hearts and minds as they led us to the throne of grace. The variety and relevance of the sermons preached have brought encouragement and challenge. It has been a quiet year for the congregation with members prayerfully reflecting on the vacancy and are now beginning to consider the next step towards making a call for a new under Shepherd. Session has had the opportunity to discuss with members where each one is in their thinking.

2) **Preaching Ministry.** We have had 23 preachers over the year, all of whom have brought us enlightenment, encouragement and challenge. Members who are able to come to the meeting house attend faithfully with reverence and an expectation of God's blessing by His Word and Spirit. Those confined to home are diligent in listening in real time to the YouTube broadcasts.

3) **The Sacraments.** We observed three uplifting communion seasons, when Prof. Peel led us in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. There was an average attendance of 17. In February, from Mark ch.15, we considered 'Christ the Suffering Servant'. In June the theme from Ps 51 was 'Great sin – Great salvation'. In October our focus from Eph. Ch. 2 was on 'Bad news and Good news'. Following the lead of Synod, we renewed our vows to God in a solemn service on Sabbath 18th December 2022. In preparation for this, Prof. Robert McCollum preached four sermons on Covenanting and Covenant Renewal in which we were reminded afresh that as God's elect, chosen people we are called to a life of holy living, witness and service to our God and Saviour.

4) **Corporate Prayer.** The core members are very diligent about making use of the prayer opportunities and some also meet in small groups for specific needs. The elders meet before the morning service to pray for the services, the preacher and two families each week from the membership. There is also a congregational prayer time before the evening service and also in the Wednesday night midweek

5) **Meetings of Session.** Session met formally on 14 occasions to oversee the work in the congregation. We are thankful to God and to the Trinity Session for two interim elders, Dr John McKelvey and Mr Stanley Wilson to work along with us in the leadership of the congregation. Meetings commence with a Scripture reading and a comment on it followed by a period of corporate prayer. The moderator constitutes the court, minutes are dealt with, agenda agreed and the business enacted. The meeting is closed in prayer and the court dissolved.

6) **Roll changes.** Our membership numbers have dropped over the year. One family has relocated due to work and Mr John Coulter, on completion of his theological studies, accepted a call to the pastorate of Drimbolg congregation. The transfer of a family of 7 plus 2 other adherents from Trinity congregation are a great blessing to our fellowship and especially our Sabbath School. Two of our regular visitors met with us at the Lord's Table. Two disjunction certificates were issued.

At the end of 2021 we had 24 members from 18 homes, 3 covenant children and 5 adherents.

At the end of 2022 we have 22 members from 16 homes, 6 covenant children and 9 adherents.

Sabbath School. Year 2021, 1 student. Year 2022, 4 students. CY. Year 2021 Suspended, Year 2022. Meeting with Trinity CY.

7) **Attendance.** Averages relates only to those attending in person : -

2022 Morning 21. Evening 18. Evening Prayer Meeting 10. Midweek 9. Communion 17.

2021 Morning 16. Evening 11. Evening Prayer Meeting 8. Midweek 10. Communion 15

8) **Evangelism/Outreach.** We have not hosted any large outreach events this year. The ladies in their craft evenings have welcomed visitors. A midweek regularly set aside for personal outreach gives flexibility to meet with others for sharing, encouragement and prayer. This year we have welcomed seven people who regularly attend worship, some of whom are in fellowship in other churches but appreciated the ministry in our congregation. All our services are broadcast and available on YouTube. At the 'Coffee Stop' refreshment stall at the town market we have sought by word and example to communicate the Gospel of Grace to traders and shoppers alike. Our refreshments, given in the name of Christ, are appreciated by many. Copies of Mark's Gospel were given to the traders at Christmas and we are distributing more among the shoppers in the coming year. A busy market is a challenging place to share the gospel.

9) **Pastoral Challenges.** No matters at present. 10) **Spiritual Life.** There is a depth of spirituality within our core membership demonstrated in faithful attendance at worship, warm caring relationships, acts of service and a desire to reach out to others.

11) **Encouragements** The unity of the congregation, support through the ministry of supply preachers, the desire of the congregation to have a new minister, two interim elders, a new family joining us and visitors returning regularly.

Challenges - The need for new converts/members, the lack of young people, the upper age profile of the congregation, the plight of the droves of lost in our town and the failure of Bible teaching in some churches

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace”. Col. 3:15.