

Secretary

2023 was a special year in the life of the church as we commenced in January celebrating God's faithfulness to us over the past 70 years. A church family dinner on Sat 13th was followed by ministry from Andrew Roycroft on the Sunday and the evening service also included the baptism of four of our church young men.

Church life was now fully back to normal after all the fallout from the Covid pandemic and in January we were once again able to hold the Amazing Journey in Dundonald Primary School; then later in May in Brooklands Primary. It was great to be able to bring the message of Jesus to so many boys and girls. In a similar way during a week in August we enjoyed the first visit for many years from a Baptist Youth (BYE) team who held a Holiday Bible Club and other events for children and young people throughout the week, culminating with a family BBQ for everyone on the final Sunday.

Every year there is change in our church life and 2023 was no exception. At our AGM in March Brian McAleese joined the team of Elders and our Deacon numbers increased to a healthy 10 with the addition of Chris Sinclair. A number of changes also took place during the year in our church membership. Eight new members joined the church while in balance four left.

Sadly our oldest church member was called home to glory in July at the amazing age of 102. Two of our church families celebrated births during the year—There were also a few other notable celebrations and birthdays

Two other major changes also took place during the year. Our assistant Pastor Chris Banks accepted a 'call' to Millisle Baptist and on completion of his training at the IBC he took up the role of Pastor there. It was with mixed emotions that we said 'goodbye' to Chris Susanna, Polly & Thomas. We pray that God will bless their ministry in Millisle. With the role of Assistant Pastor vacant it was really encouraging when Timothy Houston accepted our invitation to become our new Assistant Pastor for the next two years and we were delighted to welcome both him and Claire into fellowship In August.

The other big change to our church family was the decision of Fermo & Loi Dagondon to retire and move back to the Philippines. We all enjoyed a church lunch together just before they left and we wish them God's richest blessing as they move back home.

Work on the fabric of the building is always ongoing and while the busyness of 2022 had eased some work still had to be finished. It was great to see the new church carpet installed and new carpet and furniture for the upstairs office. We're also enjoying the benefit of the newly renovated back hall facilities. Improvements were also made to the church AV system and a new text poster was put in place for MacDonald's Drive Through

I mentioned earlier of the baptism in January and we also had the further encouragement of using the tank again in June when Andy Gray witnessed for his Lord as he was baptised.

Having restarted post-Covid in 2022 Easter saw us once again join with St. Elizabeth's and Dundonald Presbyterian for Dundonald Bible Ministries nights of meetings. It was good to spend time being fed from God's word together, the theme being 'Unity in Christ'. In August we also joined for three joint services on Sunday evenings with Comber & Newtownards Baptist fellowships.

The other work within the community alongside local churches continues through our participation in the running of Dundonald Foodbank. This year saw the Foodbank have its busiest year on record and we helped feed in total over 5000 people during the year. As part of being a 'welcoming Church' we were also pleased to hold a number of 'Welcome to Northern Ireland' meetings for new arrivals into our country over a few Thursday evenings in Late September / October

Rodney (Acting secretary)