

**VISITATION OF CONGREGATIONS**  
**COMMISSION FOR WORK AND WITNESS**  
**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, DROMORE, (NON-SUBSCRIBING)**  
Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2024

The Members of the Commission were Right Rev Lena Cockroft and Rev Alister Bell, who met with Rev Brian Moodie, and members of session and committee Ivor Park, Helen Dickson, Maureen Smyth, Gary Russell and Marie Holmes, Amanda Wilson.

### **1) Minister and Elders**

#### **a. Conduct of Worship**

- The service is held each Sunday at 11:30am with an evening service for Harvest 6pm and Carol Service at 3:00pm
- Average attendance at services is 49 (which includes 6 children), it would vary generally between the 40 and 50 with a peak attendance 80+. Communion takes place in May and November with attendance usually around 40.
- The church has held a number of special services:
  - 2023 Country Gospel (June) – Father’s Day approx 68 Attendees
  - 2023 June Children’s Service approx 55 Attendees
  - 2023 Harvest approx 65 - 75 Attendees
  - 2023 Hosted the Royal British Legion Remembrance Day Service
  - 2023 Carol Service approx 80 Attendees
  - 2023 Children’s Nativity approx 80+ Attendees
  - 2023 Christmas Day approx 50 Attendees
  - 2024 Mothering Sunday approx 63 Attendees
  - 2024 Maundy Thursday Tenebrae approx 35 - 40 Attendees
  - 2024 Easter Sunday approx 67 Attendees

#### **b) Organisation of Church Life**

- There is a Kirk Session of 7 Elders which meets with the committee.
- The Committee has 10 members who are not Elders and meets on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month.
- At the Committee and Session meeting there is an average attendance of 14.
- There are 3 subcommittees, Property, Finance and Graveyard
- Mr Ivor Park is the volunteer caretaker (assisted by Joe Martin; Roderick McMurray; David Wilson; Sam Flanagan).
- Wendy Moodie and Rev Brian would operate the Sound System.
- The church now has a meet and greet team on a rota with tea and coffee before the service.

- Those present mentioned on a number of occasions the work Rev Brian and Wendy have made since coming to Dromore, they praised the work of this husband and wife team and their ministry. As commissioners we should note the amazing efforts which this couple undertake on behalf of their congregation and this was very evident.
- Music was also a feature of the discussions with the church having 4 organists at their disposal Julie Black, Ian Beattie, Stephen Thompson and Miriam King. They commended on the willingness of Rev Brian to use his guitar which has also included some of the younger members of the congregation. Rev Brian has also taught some of the children songs with actions (using British Sign Language Signs) and for some of the hymns the congregation remain seated (due to the elderly battling to stand).
- Those present also spoke of the wonderful flower ministry which happens under Jean McIlroy and Amy Flanagan, which new displays each week and especially at Harvest.

### **c) Visiting**

- Rev Brian does pastoral visitation as often as possible, often with Wendy. In recent years with denominational commitments this has mainly become visits to the elderly and the sick for emergency visits or those in hospital.
- Rev Brian uses the Bodel/McKenzie distribution of funds as a means to visit those in receipt of the fund.
- In an interesting note a significant amount of pastoral work happens over phone, whats app and text messages, by both Rev Brian and Wendy.
- Some Elders assist with visiting on occasion and have indicated they are available on request.
- Pastoral Care – The church had a committee of about 5 people over Covid that kept contact with elderly and isolated. Since then Mrs Maureen Smyth has continued to keep contact by sending cards at Christmas, Easter and sickness and bereavement.

### **d) Potential for Growth**

It was noted that The Town is Growing rapidly, so on paper there should be room for growth. But as with many churches it was noted that it is very difficult to get new people in through the doors.

- There are 144 members associated with the church and 103 – family units (some of which are just individuals). Rev Brian was able to give some interesting comments regarding these figures: +-102 of the 144 over age of 60; with +-63 over 70.
- Rev Brian gave an analysis that:

- 118 of the 144 total members have attended at least once in the past year (includes children)
- 92 of the 144 members have attended at least 4 times a year or more (includes children)
- 73 of the 144 members attend regularly (at least 8 times or more per year) with about 35 of these (48%) over 70.
- The catchment area is mostly in and around Dromore with some members in Banbridge, Royal Hillsborough and Lisburn.

### **e) Ecumenical Contact**

- Rev Brian uses every opportunity to visit various churches either for special services or when there is a funeral of close family related to our own membership or community events like coffee mornings etc. Such visits have been made to the Catholic Church; First Dromore PCI; Church of Ireland & Methodist.
- Rev Brian also participates in the ecumenical Royal British Legion services; also attends the ministers meetings in the town when these happen (although comment was made that nothing had happened with this group in the past year)
- The Church also participates in the local Church Watch group meetings which Rev Brian and Tom Fairley have attended.
- Members participate in the World Day of Prayer.
- The Rev Brian has recently again started to take services at The Beeches sheltered dwellings.

### **Other Relevant Information -**

- There was a Men's Christmas Dinner – a great success in Dec 2023;
- The Church is also privileged to have the services of two lay preachers in the congregation: Paul McCabe and Tony Moodie;
- Other visiting ministers over the past few years have included: Rev. Lena Cockcroft; Rev. Alister Bell; Rev. Stephen Reain-Adair; Rev. Robert McKee; Rev. Simon Henning; Rev. Colin Campbell; We also had a guest speaker from Reach Mentoring (Daniel Wright).

## **2) Role of Sunday School / Youth Work / Child Protection**

### **a. Activities**

#### **Sunday School**

- The Sunday School have 4 teachers with an average attendance of 6.
- The teachers operate on a rota system.
- There is no longer a bible class.

- The children are in the church for the first part of the morning worship and leave church after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Hymn.

### **Youth Work**

- A number of the young people are involved in local youth organisations i.e Scouts and GB.
- One of the young people is undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and helps out with Tea's and Coffee.
- There have been +-25 children in attendance at the Children's Nativity service.
- A great addition to the young has been the introduction of of Beanie and Sheeny to services, a creation of Rev Brian and his wife Wendy, this came in for very positive comments from all present.

### **3) Women's Groups**

- Women's League has not formally met since Covid. Dynamics have changed and the group is not what it used to be. Some of the reasons for this are that Women are retiring much later and are very involved in child-care. When still meeting the majority of members were in 70's and 80's. Since covid many have passed away and others are no longer able to come out at night. The Women of the church, although not meeting formally as a Women's League group still play a vital role in the wider life of the church.
- In being creative during Covid a Whats' App Women's League group was started which in the end included all the women of the church (and some from Moira) this medium is used in sharing info and supporting one another.
- Until Covid the league was very active with regular meetings, Outings, fundraisers.
- Now post Covid they have an annual Christmas Dinner which until recently was in the Riverside Tea Rooms, but as it is upstairs the Tea Rooms now come to the Hall and cater there;
- Women's league members continue to serve the church in various ways: coordinating catering for special services and funerals (using outside caterers for funerals); assisting with coffee mornings, tea on a Sunday morning, Assisting with Church fundraising events and supporting the District League.
- They continue with Ecumenical Contacts – World Day of Prayer and responding to local church invitations to services and events;

### **4. Congregational Clubs and Societies –**

- Choir Still active although smaller with up to 10 singers for special services. Each year they lead praise at the service in our Moira congregation which they have done for over 75 years.
- Sadly it was reported that Bowling Club did not recommence after Covid.
- Publications - the congregation no longer publish a magazine since Covid.

- On a positive note DromoreNSP Whats App group has become a means of sharing news and items of interest between members. They currently have 82 members who are part of the Whats App Group.

## 5. **Role of Congregation in the Community**

- Two members remain transferors on the local Primary School Board of Governors, and until recently one was also part of BOG of the Local High School.

David Wilson served in this post since the time of Rev. McCormick in the mid 1990's up until the present (+-30 years of service). He is due to step down at the end of this academic year. Rev Brian has served for the past 6 years and is due to step down as well.

- Rev Brian conducts assemblies at Primary School from time to time
- Rev Brian regularly participates in RBL service in the town square for special anniversaries, eg, Anniversary of the end of the Falklands War & upcoming 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day.

## **Publicity**

- The Rev Brian puts a lot of energy into creating a Church Presence on Social Media via the Church Website, Facebook & YouTube, (Marie Holmes manages the church X account (formerly Twitter) and also updates the website. This is to be commended in the attempt to reach out to the community.
- Rev Brian was able to provide some information on the churches social media platforms.
  - Website 6,307 unique visits over from last 367 days (3,263 since 1<sup>st</sup> January)
  - YouTube – (Since 13 Dec 2020 - 201 videos; 8,005 views). Average view 40 per video.
  - Facebook - 181 likes • 206 followers (Rev Brian tries to post at least 2-4 posts every week.)
- Other Publicity was used for Advertising of Events - Carboot Sale; Ceilidh Dance; Quiz Special Services
- Outreach – the congregations continues to raise funds for charity - especially over Christmas and in the last 5 years has raised:
  - 2019 total £1186.82
  - 2020 total £1019.70
  - 2021 total £1122.45
  - 2022 total £4433.43 (Walk 400 raised £2293)
  - 2023 total £1447.16

These figures do not include contributions to various denominational charitable funds as well as donations in kind to the local food bank (Via Wings). On Average the church have collected for them about 6 times since 2020. This also excludes Carol Singing at Supervalu to raise funds for Action Cancer which generally raises around £240 every year.

The church have organised a number of events aimed at outreach within the community and have included A Songs of Praise Service; Harvest & Carol Service & Children's Christmas Service, Quiz Nights; Coffee Mornings (especially end of December)

### **Acknowledgement**

The Right Rev Lena Cockroft and the Rev Alister Bell would like that thank Rev Brian Moodie and the Session for their warm hospitality and to commend the Dromore Congregation on their continued Witness.

**Right Rev Lena Cockroft**

**Rev Alister Bell**