

KNOCK CIRCUIT

SOCIETY WORK OF GOD REPORTS FOR 2014-2015

KNOCK

The theme of the Methodist conference last June was 'Moving Out Together' and looking back over the past year we can reflect upon how God has been at work in our church and our community to help us to move forward in our journey of faith together.

We are conscious of the challenge to our congregation with regards to getting people together to have fellowship and to share their faith. Building upon the Biblica small groups of the previous year, we initiated a series of discussions based upon DVD and booklet material by Professor Tom Wright and his book 'Surprised by Hope'. Interesting and challenging discussions took place with regards to the nature of Heaven, what happens after we die and how this affects our faith in everyday life. Three groups met on different days for this short course.

Following this, members of our congregation took part in an outreach venture called 'Christianity Explored'. We joined with members of the congregations of Stormont, Gilnahirk and Knock Presbyterian with a view to inviting folk along to a neutral venue to discuss the basic precepts of Christianity. The aim was to invite people who had drifted away from church or people who had little or no experience of church. As it turned out, most folk who attended were church members but they welcomed the chance to get back to basics and discuss their Christianity with the help of the excellent material provided for this course. The course was well attended throughout. We pray that those who attended will have had their faith deepened and their evangelistic ministry in everyday life enhanced.

Dr Wendy Losty linked into this course with another course which followed immediately afterwards called 'Living Life to the Full'. This was a course which aimed to help people in a practical way to cope with the problems which life can throw at us, whether emotional, financial or personal. Again the course was aimed at folk both inside and outside the church and the feedback has been that the course was really helpful. We aim to build upon the fellowship these courses have provided and seek to deepen our spirituality in the coming year whilst we prayerfully consider how to move on with our small groups.

Over the summer intense work in restoring the stonework of our beautiful Church building took place successfully. We owe a debt of gratitude to interim Property

Steward, Mr Jimmy Boyd, for overseeing the work. We are also deeply thankful that the cost of restoration has now been fully paid.

Our beautiful Church is complemented by our state of the art Church centre which is being extensively used by both Church and outside organisations. A new handbook on using the Centre has been produced and should be carefully read and implemented by all users.

It is with thanks that we note the growth of our organisations for young people. The boys' organisations are going from strength to strength and the girls' have consistently been well organised and supported.

We have been delighted to welcome Miss Gemma Barclay as our new Youth and Children's pastor. Gemma has settled in well and has taken on new responsibilities with learning how to work the sound system in church. Gemma and Robin have recently held membership classes and 8 of our young people were recently received into full membership of the church during a moving Easter day service. Gemma has already been God's instrument in strengthening the faith of our young people.

The World Around Us programme continues to bring non church members along with members into our buildings for a series of interesting and inspiring talks. Professor Bob Stout has been a dedicated organiser of these talks and we offer him our deepest sympathies on the passing away of his wife Pat who was a faithful and devoted servant of the church and who ran the Luncheon Club for about 33 years.

We have had some upheaval with our staffing arrangements with the retiring of our Caretaker Mr Frank Joy coinciding with taking on Mr Victor Browne as Church Facilities Manager. This was a new role and after 6 months it was mutually decided that Victor would no longer continue in this role. A staff reshuffle has taken place with Lesley Moreland, our Pastoral Assistant, taking on the administrative role of running the Church Centre along with her pastoral duties. Under the auspices of Jimmy Boyd a volunteer rota has been set up for caretaker duties and Lesley will manage this rota. This is a trial process after which a review will be taken with regards to the need for a caretaker. Mr Shane Stewart has been engaged to cover the gardening duties.

The Haiti mission trip after Christmas included our own Nicky Algie who joined 12 other Methodists on a mission which included conducting health clinics, running kids clubs and helping with building accommodation for teachers. Nicky was able to help dispense medicines which had been purchased through money raised from fund raising activities at home.

Knock Methodist continues to support the World Development and Relief fund in their 'Partner a Project' in Nepal and also regularly contributes to the Storehouse Ministry. Faithful collectors for Christian Aid set out each May under the guidance of Jim Kennedy to help bring in much needed funds for this worthwhile cause.

We were blessed by the ministry of Wendy Johnston, a Biblical storyteller, who led our holy week lunch time services. Right Reverend John McDowell, Bishop of Clogher, led the evening services in St Columba's and Rev Dr Heather Morris led the 3 hour devotions at St Columba's on Good Friday. It was with joy that we celebrated the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ, on Easter day in a service which included the reception of 8 young people into church membership. We are deeply mindful and appreciative of the services of our organist, Stephen Preston, and our choir members and the hard work they put in to provide inspiring and beautiful music to lead us in our worship.

With regards to Sunday morning worship we have enjoyed the increased input of our young people who have helped lead us in prayers, reading and music and in our more informal Sunday evening services. We pray for our young people that they will continue to grow in faith and in their love of God.

There are so many people who work together to serve our church and a volunteers evening was held on Friday 8th May to acknowledge and thank folk who help in many ways from serving tea, to putting out chairs to welcoming people at the doors. Everyone serves in different ways and we give thanks for them all. We are also deeply appreciative of the hard work and dedication by all who take part in producing our annual pantomime which brings church members of all ages together.

We give thanks to God for the ministry of Reverend Robin Waugh over the last 7 years. Robin has led our church through major building works culminating in the opening of our wonderful church centre which provides excellent facilities to both our own members and to the local community. Robin's strong leadership skills have given the congregation confidence and strengthened our commitment to further our outreach and develop our faith. Our challenge as he leaves us in June is to keep moving forward and build on his legacy of creating an awareness of the importance of meeting together in small groups to have fellowship. Robin's sense of humour, his strong faith and love of God have permeated through every part of his ministry. Many people, including myself, have been very touched by his pastoral care in times of need and loss.

We assure Robin, Deryn, Rachel and Nathan our continued prayers, love and friendship as they move to Sydenham Methodist Church. We pray that God will bless them in

their new home and surroundings and that they will always be aware of the strengthening and enabling presence of our Lord. We will miss them.

We pray every blessing on our new minister, Reverend Britt Gilmore, and his wife Alison and children Ellie, Emily and Jake and we look forward to moving on with them in our journey of faith together.

As I step down from the position of Society Steward, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all who have helped me with kind words and practical support and prayers. Special thanks to Barclay for his support and thanks to all for their prayers as he went through his recent heart surgery.

Penny Kennedy, (former) Society Steward

DUNDONALD

The Dundonald Society continues to be a friendly and welcoming fellowship who seek to know and serve God through work in the church and in the community.

The society holds two weekly worship services that are open to all. Throughout the year members of the congregation have participated in worship in a range of ways from praying and reading to leading whole services and speaking. It has been a delight to see members face fears and trust that God would help them as they try new things in worship.

There have been a number of special services to celebrate significant points in the church calendar. Harvest thanksgiving saw significant giving towards the work carried out through the Container Ministry and Carols by Candlelight was a moving part of our Christmas celebrations. Sharing with the Rev. Donald Ker during Holy Week helped us to prepare for the significance of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and the victory won through His resurrection. We have also been blessed by a presidential visit in recent weeks. At various times we have heard the testimony of different members during evening worship and these have been inspiring and challenging times.

At present our musical worship is led by a team of people who share the responsibility on a rotational basis. They seek to balance our traditional hymn culture with more modern music in order to help the congregation as they worship. Members of the group attended a worship conference in Eastbourne during the past year where they received training in a number of aspects of leading worship. This training has inspired

the members and led to further developments within the group. The choir also seek to use their gifts in worship services using music to help others engage with God.

During morning worship there are groups which meet to teach children and young teens about the gospel. Kids Own is a program for children in nursery through to Year 7. The group spends time singing, playing games and learning bible stories. The children share in prayer and worship and are developing their ideas about God and His place in their life. Bible Class is for young teens; through this program the young people seek to engage in understanding the Bible in relation to their lives. During evening worship the Youth Fellowship meet for those up to 18 years old. They also seek to help young people to engage with scripture in a safe and caring space. These groups have come together to lead morning worship on a number of occasions. At present the leaders, with the support of the church council, are seeking to evaluate and make changes that will allow others to access these groups.

The society holds two weekly prayer meetings on a Monday night and Sunday morning. These are times when we corporately seek God's guidance and blessing on the work of the church and bring the needs of others before God.

We have been using a bible study model over the past year with weekly meetings on Wednesday evenings. These have taken a number of forms. Prior to Christmas we focused on individual Bible characters and sought to answer the question, 'what would you do in their position?' We have also explored Methodist history and Methodist beliefs.

Mission

As hosts of the circuit holiday bible club in summer 2014 we were able to engage with families from our local area in a different way. It was an opportunity to share with children God's love through the life of Peter and allow this message to travel home. A family event midweek also allowed an opportunity to engage with the parents of some of those in attendance.

During the past year members of the society have been engaging with the Lay Witness Movement and plans are in place for a Lay Witness weekend to take place in October 2015. The aim of the weekend is to engage the members of the society to live in God's plans for each of us. The theme will be **More... wanting, knowing, growing, serving.**

Church Groups

There are a variety of groups which meet within the church buildings throughout the week. These groups offer support and fellowship through a range of activities and programs. There are groups for all ages and genders and they represent a variety of interests.

MOPS, Mothers of Pre-schoolers, has been developing their connections with mothers from the local area. The leaders have been developing their program and have a fun, friendly, child focused event which reaches out to others.

Buttercups is a girls group for those ages 4-6, it has replaced the Rainbow Guides. The leaders felt that guiding had little respect or space for God following changes to the promise and have run a more God focused program. They have experienced growth over the past year almost doubling in size. We were recently blessed when the girls lead morning worship. We have continued to host 2nd Dundonald Brownies over the past year.

7th Belfast scout troop continue to be a strong group and meet within the church weekly for boys and girls aged 4 and up. The group is well respected in the local area and has made contacts with many local families.

There are several craft focused groups meeting at different times these include a knit and chat group and a banner making group. Both groups have contributed pieces for worship including a fabulous collaboration in making a nativity scene over the Christmas period.

For those who enjoy tripping the light fantastic a dancing group has been returned by popular demand. They enjoy traditional dances with a bit of supper alongside. The group connects with many outside the society.

The Friendship circle is a place of friendship and fellowship for senior members of our society and community. They have had a number of interesting speakers throughout the year and have lead us in family worship.

There are monthly meetings for men and women through the Men's Breakfast and MWI. Each month the men meet for a fry up and fellowship, they hear the God stories of people invited to share and many have been inspired through these testimonies. The women have had a variety of speakers throughout the year sharing both cultural and

spiritual messages and the annual special effort saw monies raised for Foodbank and a project in Burma.

Community

The society continues to be involved in the local community through a number of groups.

The Dundonald Foodbank is run by seven local churches and seeks to provide food and support to local families in crisis. The Society hosted the Foodbank in the church halls during the Summer months when they were forced to move from their premises at the local business park. The Foodbank has since relocated to the former Danske Bank premises which have been purchased by the group to ensure a continuous and sustainable presence to support families in need. Community services are one way of engaging with local groups who support families via the Foodbank.

The Rev. Sheerin is engaged with the Ballybeen Improvement Group (BIG) an umbrella group for all community organisations in the Ballybeen area. This is an opportunity to meet and develop relations with other community groups and with the staff of BIG. A representative of BIG visited our holiday bible club, Starship Discovery, in July.

We continue to have good relations with other churches in the local community, particularly the Church of Ireland and Presbyterian churches and at times including the Salvation Army. There have been joint services through the summer and other times throughout the year. These services are an encouragement and support to each congregation. At Christmas and Easter joint services were held in the local community centre to offer a safe space for those who may not otherwise attend church. These services engaged with the local primary school and the Enler Centre, a day facility for the elderly.

We have also hosted some family events during the past year including a Frozen family movie night in July and a Heroes and Heroines Light Party in October. These events welcomed children and their parents to come and join in a family fun time seeking to engage with families in a different way.

Whilst the above report reflects a busy and lively church throughout the week the church council have been seeking to know God's will for His people in Dundonald. They have been looking at our perceived strengths and weaknesses and asking God to show us a way forward that we may truly offer our all to Jesus and offer Jesus to all.

Cheryl Bruce, Society Steward

BRANIEL

SERVICES

In May 2014 we took part in the joint Christian Aid service with our near neighbours Gilnahirk Presbyterian and St. Dorothea's Church of Ireland. Also in May we had a visit from a team in Sheffield who were hosted by our local Community Church. This team had enrolled in a course of study called Form which Focuses on Christian Leadership, Discipleship and Outreach. They worked during the Week tidying gardens and the local churches shared the programme venues. As we have a dance class we hosted the tea dance on the Thursday and the team shared in both our services on the Sunday. In September we had the dedication of the crèche and Sunday school teams and some of us went to the Dock Café for an evening praise service including an interview with the Former Sinn Fein Lord Mayor Martin Ó Muilleoir showing us a very ecumenical side to his term of office. Also in September we took a morning to outline our Welcome project with committee Members sharing their thoughts on the 5 aspects of the project: PEOPLE, PRESENCE, PRAYER AND BIBLE STUDY, PASTORAL CARE, PREMISES.

For the Remembrance Day service our guest speaker was the Rev Jan Taylor a retired RAF Chaplain living in the Gilnahirk area. He inspired us with his own family military history spanning 100 years from his grandfather, his own father and his own service. We had a reception service for 4 of our folk after their 4 week membership class. Our Advent communion services took place over 4 weeks and were well attended. December is always a busy month with BCM gift service, primary school carol service and our own church carol service with carol singing round the estate in the evening. For Christian Unity Sunday this year we had 5 churches involved with the community church and the Baptist church with us for the first time. In January we had 2 tragic deaths which affected our church family. In November our Remembrance Day service was led by the Rev Jan Taylor. He collapsed suddenly during a session in the gym and died a week later. John Wonnacott took part in the service along with the Rev Nigel Kirkpatrick from St .Dorothea's Church of Ireland and Rev Stephen Moor from Gilnahirk Presbyterian. The other death was the suicide of a 19 year old girl whose family had connections with our church which came as a great shock to the many who attended the funeral who knew the family.

Our Holy Week Services this year incorporated the 5 local churches for the first time. We were blessed by our speaker for the week-the Rev Gerardo Gimpel who is a curate in Knockbreda Parish church and originates from Chile. His theme over the 5 nights was the sayings of Jesus on his way to the Cross. Our own minister John Wonnacott was diagnosed with a detached retina just after Easter and our services have been

conducted by local preachers and the Rev Robert Russell and Rev Harold Good. We have continued with our monthly prayer meetings, Bible studies and house groups and have been blessed as we have all pulled together to continue to grow in faith.

PREMISES

We took the opportunity over the summer of 2014 to address the issue of our crumbling floor in the sanctuary and replaced the carpet together with introducing new screens for our Powerpoint presentations. These screens were positioned so that our wooden cross which had formerly covered by a central screen can now be clearly seen and gives us a focus at the front of the church. In 2015 as part of our Welcome project we have been exploring the possibility of upgrading our toilet block and kitchen in our hall together with adding a new entrance with an additional room giving us a panoramic view over the city. Clem McKee has been of great help to the church in drawing up plans and helped us in our application to the Rank Trust resulting us being offered a grant of £25000. The process will now continue through Circuit Executive to the Methodist Property Board on its way to Synod in September after which planning and tenders will lead on to the completion of the project next year.

ACTIVITIES

The circuit Holiday Club held in Dundonald was really enjoyed by our children and leaders and the idea of praying for individual children who attended was taken up by 45 of our congregation. We had during the summer been able to accommodate an after school club in the church hall as the school was having building work done. We have been able to help them out again at Hallowe'en. We now have Slimming World using the premises on Thursday night. During the week beginning 4th November a Braniel Remembrance Festival was held in various venues in the area. A film night was held in our Women's Fellowship on the Wednesday night and a lantern procession from the local primary school to the church on the Friday night. A short service was held in the church car park followed by a cross laying ceremony by the children on the green at the side of the big hall and finished off by supper inside. On the Saturday night the Festival of Remembrance from the Albert Hall was televised live in the church. The Festival concluded with a wartime play performed by the children from the primary school. The whole Festival brought together the church with the school, community association, dreamscheme and the other churches in the area.

We have been blessed this year as 4 of our own folk have decided to go on mission with Nicola Coulter our church secretary going to Nepal and Michael and Laura Briggs and

Christine Dodd going to Romania and we held a very successful quiz night to help them financially on their trips.

The irony of the death of Rev Jan Taylor was that a few weeks prior to his death he had asked the church if he could start a class on circus skills which was one of his passions. On the order of service for his funeral there was a photograph of Jan on a unicycle that class took place and attracted a fair bit of interest. One of the leaders was Jan's son.

Nicola along with Stephen, Tim and David thankfully returned from Nepal and took part in a wonderful night of praise in Dundonald celebrating their visit and helping us to understand the plight of the women in the Kopali project.

Bobby Currie, Society Steward

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

The President Designate is the Rev. Brian Anderson. The theme for his Presidential year comes from 1 Peter 2: 10 **'I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world... v.12 live such good lives...'**

Brian writes: Peter is writing to small groups of Christians in a few places (1: 1) who were living their faith against the back drop of a pagan, sometimes hostile, culture. I suggest that the Church today is witnessing in a similar changing situation, that the Christian story is no longer at the heart of the nation.

Take the following statements:

A) Christianity has been moved from the Centre to the margins. It used to be that Christian faith, Christian values and the Christian story were at the centre of our nations outlook, but now we sit on the margins - our values, views and theologies are marginalised - e.g. the 'Asher' case.

B) Christian faith has moved from the majority to the minority. Numbers attending churches have declined and the fewer numbers are consolidating in growing Churches.

C) Christians felt at home in a culture shaped by their Christian values but we are now living in a culture that is alien to us, and we no longer feel at home.

D) Church used to be able to emphasis maintenance - we had the critical mass of people to supported activities, but now we don't have the numbers, and so we need to have a missionary mind set. That means Christians thinking very differently about how they exercise their faith. It can no longer be 'put it on and they will come'. Rather 'how do we meet them on their patch'.

We know something is wrong - but what to do? How much time is spent running the church as against releasing people to be Christians, to be missionaries, where they spend most of their time?

Peter in his epistle suggests three priorities

1) BE HOLY - In the face of Persecution (name calling, loosing face, social ostracism) live Holy, upright lives. See 1 Peter 1; 13-15; 2; 11-12; 3, 8-10 & 13-16.

In light of the strange land, be the best follower of Jesus you can be.

In what ways are you distinctive from your Christian Neighbours/ work colleagues/ sporting friends?

2) LOVE YOUR FELLOW CHRISTIANS AND SEEK UNITY

See 1 Peter 1v22, 2v17- 3v8- 4v8-.

3) BE A MISSIONARY IN WORD AND DEED WHERE YOU SPEND THE MOST OF YOUR TIME. See 1 Peter 3 15-16 1 Peter 2; 13 -25 and 3; 1-7.

It was the whole Christian Community.

And they should be able to explain their faith.

Peter is very insistent that his Christian listeners realized they were saved, going to heaven and that could not be taken from them, but they were going to have a tough time here on earth. They were going to suffer but their faith was built on Jesus overcoming his terrible suffering and what was before them was nothing in comparison. The Christians were going to have to be aliens - foreign travellers, who bring a new way of life that challenges the pagan culture and society, but that the gospel was worth it.

In view of the above;

- 1) Are you comfortable to take on the role of aliens or strangers?
- 2) How important is discipleship in your church?
- 3) What would happen if all different age groups worked together in your church?
- 4) How might you be a missionary where you spend most of your time or imagine every door you go through as a missionary opportunity?
- 5) What other aspects of church life give you cause for concern?
- 6) What aspects of church life give you hope for the future?