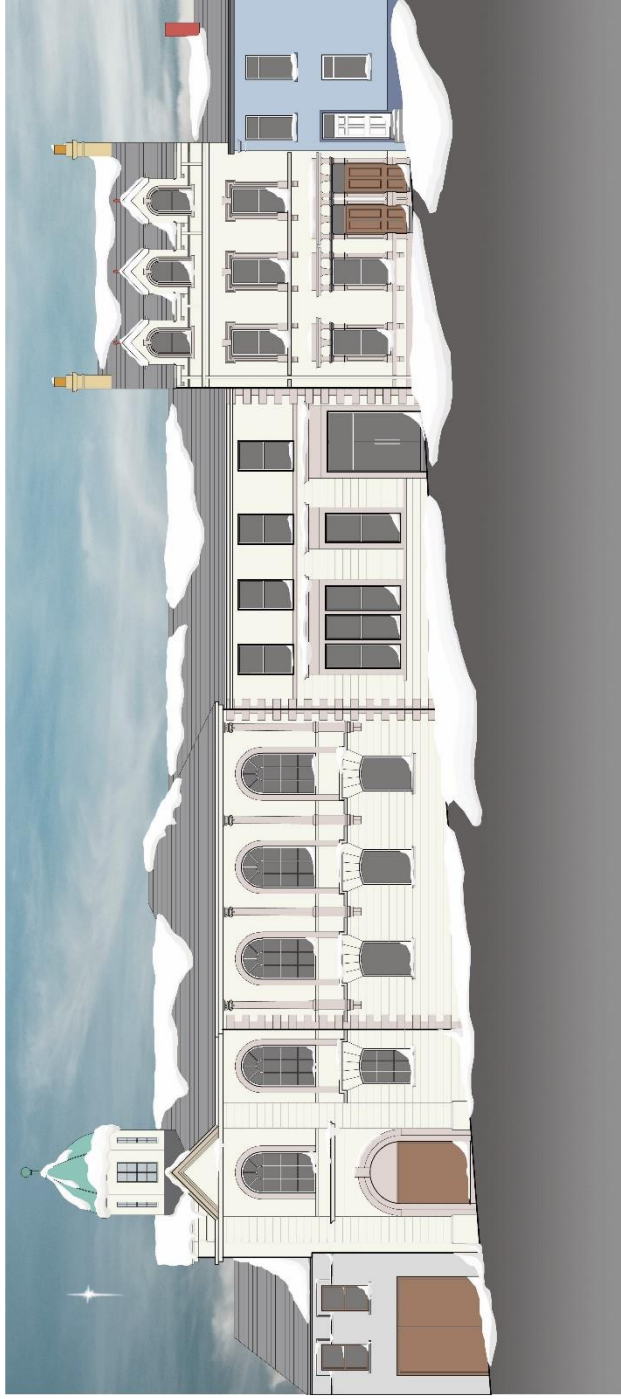


DONAGHADEE METHODIST CHURCH



Church Magazine - February 2023

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The Ministers and the Pastoral Coordinator are always grateful to be kept informed about members suffering illness or bereavement.

website: www.donaghadeemethodist.com

*for up-to-date information about church activities
and to watch church services online*

Cover

The drawing is by the church's Conservation Architect, Ken Best, of the Gordon McKnight architectural partnership in Hollywood. It appeared on the partnership's Christmas card last year. The Editor is grateful for permission to reproduce it.

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Editorial

Welcome to an early Spring edition of the Magazine. Hopefully it won't be too long before Spring is really here! Already we have snowdrops and crocuses in the garden and the promise of more flowers to come.

I am grateful to all those who sent me articles – apparently we are admired for the quality of the magazine we produce – so thanks to you all.

Bert has an article on his memories of the Lay Witness scheme. We are going to lose Bert soon and the Magazine will be the poorer for his going but we wish him every blessing in this new phase of his life.

Having been the recipient of Pat's apple crumbles I can recommend them highly and thanks to June you will know where your monthly gifts of food go and how they are distributed. The MWI, Walking Group and Men's Breakfast offer you a warm welcome.

'Connect' Christian Counselling Service celebrates its twentieth birthday and we congratulate everyone involved in that Service and wish them every blessing in the work that they so successfully do. I am looking forward to hearing from you when the time comes for the next magazine.

Until then every good wish for the year that lies ahead.

The Editor

Minister's letter

January can be a bit of a depressing month. It's about 50 days long, it's dark, dreary, cold, wet, and miserable. We celebrated Christmas and welcomed in the New Year, but we are now in mid – February and there are small glimpses of hope of Spring, which is just round the corner. The daffodils and crocuses are growing and beginning to flower. We are beginning to see a bit of a stretch in the evenings with a little more daylight each afternoon. We may even be hearing the drone of lawn mowers in the background as gardeners are getting back out into the garden which is waking from its winter hibernation. It feels like the world around us is coming back to life.

As a church family we have welcomed our President, Rev David Nixon and Lay Leader, Mr Tom Wilson at a wonderful service of praise when we remembered how lavish God's love is for each one of us.

We will very soon be entering into the season of Lent when we begin another period of waiting and journeying with Christ to Jerusalem and ultimately to the cross. However, we remember that journey comes to a climax as Christ is raised to life again in the power, love, and grace of God. It can be easy for the church year to become routine just as normal life can become routine. But we must not miss the awe and incredulity that this story can bring. We will be given an

opportunity throughout Lent to take time in our prayer space which will be put together to allow members of the church, and anyone who would like to come in, to spend time reflecting on the journey to Jerusalem and the Easter story.

As a church we will also have our annual Congregational Meeting when we will give thanks for what we have done in the past year. While considering how we move forward as a church under Gods power and the Spirit's leading. We will also have a change in leadership as some changes are made to the makeup of the Church Council. This meeting is an opportunity for you to talk about any aspect of the Church. So please do have a think about anything you would like discussed at that meeting and either speak to me or one of your congregational representatives.

It has been encouraging to see the response to our Parent and Toddlers group which has been meeting on a Thursday morning since November. We have a number of children now on our register with consistent numbers each week. We are grateful for our partnership with Homestart North down as they bring knowledge and experience that has been extremely beneficial. It is lovely to see the kids playing and running around the hall and groups of parents and caregivers chatting over a cuppa. We continue to pray that this group will grow and flourish.

As I write this I am preparing to meet with a group of Junior Ministers (those travelling less than 10 years) in Castlewellan Castle for 2 nights for a time of retreat, worship, fellowship and study. As I know many of you pray for me, I would ask that you pray for our Junior Ministers and indeed all our ministers across Ireland. I look forward to this time together as fellowship and encouragement in Christ is important. Both for us as ministers and for us a congregation.

May we continue to seek Christ, in our own lives, in fellowship together in our church and in our local community.

Rev Louise McKee

President's visit

On 12th February we had the honour of hosting the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Rev David Nixon, and the Lay Leader, Mr Tom Wilson. We realised that the President has a very busy schedule and we appreciated him making time to visit us here in Donaghadee. It was his first visit to our church.

Welcoming the President and the Lay Leader to our church, Louise reminded us that the President served for years in the mission field in Zambia, and had also been involved in the

Lay Witness scheme and had held many other posts in the Church, as had the Lay Leader.

Tom Wilson opened the service with a call to worship from Isaiah, followed by prayers and the reading of the lesson, which was taken from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 15, the story of the Prodigal Son.

After another hymn, the President addressed us. He said that having served in farming country in the South it was not unusual for him to take a service in the afternoon. He reminded us that his theme for his year in office was “God’s lavish love”. In the chosen scripture Jesus was speaking to an audience of tax collectors, Pharisees and teachers of the Law. The story of the Prodigal Son came after a series of parables illustrating God’s joy over finding that which had been lost: the lost sheep, the lost coin and now the lost son. The Prodigal Son was the best example of that love, because it made it so personal: a lost son.

It must have hurt the father when his son asked to be given his inheritance now, to enable him to leave home and do what he wanted. How would we have felt if we had experienced the same thing? He son was making off with half the wealth of the family, and his father must have guessed that it would not end well. The son wasted the money and it was only when he was left with nothing that he plucked up courage to return home and beg forgiveness of his father.

But his father not only forgave him, he ran to meet him, which was unheard of in those days, and killed the fatted calf to celebrate his return. What better illustration of ‘God’s lavish love’? And like His Father, Jesus did the same for the errant Peter, utterly forgiving him and welcoming him back into His service. The President gave other examples from the scriptures, all reinforcing the same point, that we needed to show love and forgiveness, to have mercy and to reach out.

After another hymn, the Lay Leader led us in prayers for other before the President joined everyone in sharing the blessing as he closed the service. Everyone was invited to meet in the Hall for a cup of tea and an opportunity to speak to our distinguished visitors. I am sure I speak for everyone present in saying that they greatly enjoyed the service and were fed by the word the President gave us.

(pictures on back page)

Yvonne Clegg

Change

In 2008 Rev Ruth Craig asked me to take on the role of Society Steward with Joe Wright as Circuit Steward. Born into an active Methodist family, I enjoyed Synod, Conference and following the workings of the Methodist church in Ireland. During my time in office the Rev Tom McKnight was secretary of Conference then President of the Methodist

church and we lived through a Pandemic. Now we are in a period of austerity, the crippling cost of energy is being felt by all. We were part of the Warm Spaces initiative in the town before Christmas. Coffee & Craft, Coffee & Chat, Parents & Toddlers and our Bible studies all provide a space where people can meet together.

As Circuit Steward I try to deal with the practical management of the church and manse property. Disability access and heating has been a problem in the halls and the church over this past year and I hope the church officers will be able to move forward to give us a new church ceiling, tidy carpark with a new gate and eventually, now that we have been granted planning permission, a new set of halls.

A special word of thanks to Robert McCready, who works tirelessly and does everything asked of him to keep the property clean and comfortable. Kathryn McDaid is now the new Circuit Steward and I know you will support her in every way.

Geraldine

Encouragement

Browsing through Facebook I came across posts from ‘Clergy Coaching Network’, some ascribed to others, some anonymous. I find these posts are challenging for individuals and for congregations; so here are just a few:

- Be the reason that someone feels welcome, seen, heard, valued, loved and supported.
- Jesus doesn't care how many Bible verses you have memorized. He cares more about how you treat people.
- If you see what needs to be repaired and how to repair it, then you have found a piece of the world that God has left for you to complete. But if you only see what is wrong and what is ugly in the world, then it is you yourself that needs repair.
- Wanted: ENCOURAGERS
(We have a surplus of critics already, thanks)
- We are already in the presence of God.
What is absent is awareness!
- Being a follower of Christ doesn't make me immune to brokenness, pain or hardship. It just means I have an anchor to hold me in the storm.
- Depression is not a sin. It's an illness. Mental illness requires treatment, not condemnation. Walk gently in the lives of others. Not all wounds are visible!
- Think about this one: As I watched the dog chasing its tail I thought dogs are easily amused. Then I realised I was watching the dog chasing its tail!
- Enjoy and be challenged.

Robert Watson

Reflections

To-day I want to share with you Laurence Graham's book "Hope from the margins" which also happens to be the Book Club's current choice.

His main point is that the Church to-day is no longer is of importance or relevance. We are no longer in the centre of to-day's world as the Church has been for centuries but we have been pushed to the margins, so how do we operate from the fringe of society?

He looks at the history of the Christian Church from its beginnings as a group that was threatened and persecuted. It was a small group, but despite the threats it spread all over the ancient world. How? Once Christianity became the State religion under Constantine the Church grew large, wealthy and comfortable with the State imposing penalties on those who remained outside its teaching and who were eventually forced into its ranks, often with violence. This meant that the Church now had members who paid lip service only. There was still mission and caring for the sick but it was more institutionalized and the early intensity was largely lost. We are now, like the early Church, on the edge of society, so how do we do mission? We can hold and advertise events but they rarely have any impact. The author thinks that we need to

look at the early church and how it impacted society. We need to be ‘incarnational’ rather than ‘invitational’. It was the love shown by the early Christians that attracted others into the church. Indeed, most people to-day who come into the Church come with a friend. Paul didn’t tell his readers how to do mission but how they should live. It is the way we live, love and help that attracts people, i.e. we are to be Jesus in society. The early Christians shared Jesus, not because they were told to , but because He was so important to them that they couldn’t keep quiet.

To quote Laurence Graham “The Church is at the margins now. We are no longer central to society. That leaves us with a choice – we can slowly die in marginal irrelevance or we can offer hope from the margins.

This is what we can do to-day- offer hope from the margins praying and hoping that one day ‘they will come’ or we can live authentically distinctive lives, wherever we are; caring, welcoming, gently speaking in ways that make people wonder why we are different. That is what Jesus did when He walked the earth. This is how his followers lived in the early centuries even though they were marginalized. This is what we can do to-day. Are you up for the challenge?

Maeve

A Gift that keeps on Giving

When our daughter Fiona was born, John's dad Albert planted a Bramley apple tree in the back garden at New Road as a gift for her. Some 1³/₄ years later Peter was born and Albert planted an "eater" 'James Grieve' beside the Bramley. Albert was a knowledgeable gardener and there was a reason for a cooker and an eater to be together – maybe it was a male or female thing – I don't know. That was over 40 years ago (Sorry Fiona!!)

Over the last ten or more years we have had bumper crops and I was able to give lots to my golfing friends. However, as I stopped playing golf 6¹/₂ years ago I find myself picking up windfalls every couple of days. From September to December, I am over the sink peeling, coring and stewing! However, it is worth the effort as I am able to enjoy stewed apples with my porridge every morning for most of the year – "Thank you Granda Albert"

Over the years John has wanted to get rid of the trees as they are old and knarled and he bumps his head on the branches when he cuts the grass. I have however succeeded in keeping them so far

Fiona and Peter still enjoy their Granda's gift by eating my Devonshire Apple Cake, apple crumble and apple tarts and this year John surprised us all by baking Apple and Cinnamon Muffins which we all applauded, but unfortunately

it only happened once!?? Must ask him for help with the loppers – I think it's time to prune.

I'm writing this in the Advent Season when we remember and rejoice at God's great gift to us in Jesus who waits for us to accept Him. He keeps on giving.

Pat Caldwell

Lay Witness Weekend

When I reflect on my 50 years in the ordained ministry there is one event that stills thrills me when I think of it. A Lay Witness Weekend in Greencastle Church. A Lay Witness Weekend is a visit to a church, over a weekend, by a group of lay people who are part of the Lay Witness Movement, during which time members of the group share their experience of God.

After months of praying, planning and preparation the team arrived on the Friday in time for a welcoming tea with the congregation. Team members were introduced to their hosts for the weekend and friendships started to form. Following the meal we all moved into the church for a time of praise during which the team introduced themselves and shared their hopes for the weekend. At the end of the worship the team leader gave an invitation, which I thought was premature, for anyone who wanted a closer relationship with God to come forward and team members would pray with them. To my surprise and delight one young woman came forward and knelt at the communion rail. She was in

poor health and had been through two failed procedures which had left her quite depressed.

The Church Prayer Meeting was on Saturday mornings at 8:00am., this time augmented by members of the Lay Witness Team. Saturday was a particularly busy one with Coffee Mornings, meals with hosts and the afternoon given over to prayer either in the church or by team members visiting in homes ending in an evening praise meeting. There was a lot to pray about. In the Coffee Mornings five households in the congregation invited members of the congregation to meet with two of the team for a time of Coffee and Chat. Chat became sharing between Lay Witnesses and Church members. At the time we didn't realise the work that God was doing in those Coffee Mornings. With hindsight we came to recognise those meetings as the most transforming element of the weekend. It was a fulfilment of Christ's promise that where two or three are gathered in His name He is there in the middle of it all.

We had decided to have the church open during Saturday afternoon for anyone who wanted to meet the team members for a chat or prayer. Again, I didn't expect too many folk to call in, Saturday was a day for going into town or to a match. I set off around the housebound of the congregation with two of the team. When we returned to the church, I was greeted by the Society Steward shouting "I saw it grow." "I saw it grow." He went on. "Margaret came to ask for prayer about her leg and I saw it grow while they were praying." "She's in there, walking straight." Actually, she wasn't there, her husband had come for her and they

had gone shopping. However, she turned up for our evening meeting “walking straight” with her somewhat bemused husband. The limp that had plagued her for years was gone.

The evening meeting was an enthusiastic celebration of worship and praise interspersed with some members of the team sharing their daily experience of God while others talked about how He had brought them through difficult times. At the end of the meeting a few people responded to the invitation to come for prayer but most of them were stalwarts of faith. There had been enthusiastic singing, the witnesses had been listened to in pin-drop silence and the congregation left the church saying that the night had been great, but I was disappointed that more had not come forward.

I shared my disappointment with some of the church leaders before the Sunday Service, to which one replied. “Well, there was one on Friday and a few more last night, so it’s going in the right direction.” The service was quietly worshipful, in comparison to the night before. There may have been one life story, but the two Team Leaders drew together themes from the previous meetings and encouraged us to keep being faithful to God.

Rev Bert Montgomery

To be continued in our next – Ed.

Church Accounts for 2022

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenditure</u>	
Envelopes	33834	Stipend	38591
Loose	2483	Mileage	705
Electronic	17295	Other expenses	1113
Donations	360	Music	2104
Benevolent Fund	367	Phone and internet	783
Gift Aid (1)	13342	Pulpit supply	150
Premises	2855	Printing and postage	1586
Interest	389	Meth Newsletter	285
Sale of publications	297	Catering	641
Other	36	Benevolent Fund	307
		Church utilities	6058
		Church maintenance	2529
		Insurance	3493
		Manse maintenance	4258
		Manse furnishing	3934
		Manse rates	983
		Young people	480
		Bank charges	203
		Assessment	12990
		Donations (2)	610
		Other	163
Notes			
<i>1. Excluding £596 for Connexional Funds</i>			
<i>2. Belfast City Mission, East Belfast Mission, Royal British Legion, Methodist Historical Society, Kids for Schools</i>			
Total income	71258	Total expenditure	81966

2022 was not a great year for the church financially. The basic income and expenditure account (above) shows a deficit of more than £10,000 for the year. Part of that is due to the unusually high cost of heating, and we spent quite a bit on the manse, including a

new boiler. But there was also a falling off of offerings – especially in the form of envelopes and loose offerings. There are simply not as many members making regular contributions and we have lost some members who were very generous givers.

We received a welcome legacy from the late Maureen Parks which served to balance the books in 2022, but we cannot count on legacies, which come very infrequently. It is not safe to score them as regular income. Our investments were shaken by the war in Ukraine and the rise in interest rates as a consequence of all the borrowing and spending the Government did in connection with the COVID epidemic. They were well down at the close of 2022 but have recovered in the first months of 2023 (though they are still down a bit on a year ago). There is not room in the magazine to print all the figures, but if anyone would like a copy of the complete accounts, please ask me.

We have spent money wisely on repairing the roof and installing storm glazing to keep the weather out, and the next steps will be to replace the church ceiling (which has holes in it) and re-plaster the walls which were damaged by damp. That will all cost money, but that is what the building fund is for, and it is just good stewardship.

Other things we may be spending money on are a new gate to the car park (it is falling apart with rust), a new boiler – or at least, radical repairs to the heating system – in the Wesley Hall (essential for the Mums and Toddlers) and a new sound system to stop all the crackles and hums we are getting at the moment. These things all need to be done, but they won't make it any easier to balance the books.

In reality, it is difficult to see how the gap between income and expenditure is going to be closed any time soon. The deficit in the current year is likely to be at least as large as last year. The church has reserves and it can survive a number of years while running a deficit. But unless we can see a prospect of getting back into balance it is hard to make the case for investing in the major improvements we want to the church hall and kitchen, especially from the point of view of disabled access.

At some stage Head Office is going to take over responsibility for reclaiming Gift Aid. I am going to need your help in getting our Gift Aid registrations complete and correct before we hand over.

But at least the church is *doing* things – like Mums and Toddlers and Warm Spaces - not just sitting back and letting “change and decay in all around I see” become its watchword!

Kit Chivers, Treasurer

MY MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

*My man for all seasons
is always close by;
He lives in the earth,
the seas and the sky
Wherever I am,
be it darkness or light,
My man for all seasons
will guide me aright.*

*My man for all seasons
knew me long before
He gave me birth
on this earthly shore.
He knew all the paths
that I must travel by;
Till the time we shall meet
in the sweet Bye and Bye.*

*My man for all seasons
holds me by the hand;
Leads me through ways
that I don't understand.
Shares all my burdens,
calms all my fears
Is a balm for my sorrows,
a joy through my tears.*

*My man for all seasons
is Jesus my Lord,
He speaks to me
through his life-giving word.
A light to my path,
a lamp to my feet;
With my man for all seasons
my life is complete.*

Poem by G.B.Walker
Contributed by John Wright

MWI Winter: October 2022 -February 2023

When we restarted our meetings after the summer break, we were delighted to see that our numbers have remained about 20 women at our monthly meetings. We have had some very interesting subjects:

December 2022: We had a talk from the manager of the food bank where we send donations monthly.

January 2023: We visited the food bank, having been invited at our December meeting. The food bank in Bangor is very comprehensive not only having food available, they also provide premises for meetings, talks and food demonstrations.

February 2023: We had a marvellous talk from Freda about Mount Stewart. Freda is very knowledgeable about the National Trust property. The history of the family is very interesting and the treatment of their tenants remarkably generous. Freda promised to come back again, as she had so much to say it was impossible to fit it in to one meeting.

Our final meeting for this session is on Monday 6th March. We are looking forward to our MWI service . This is on 19th March and our speaker is Rev Daphne Hanna. Hope to see you all there.

Every blessing,
Helen and Mary

Walking Group

We have continued our walking through the winter on Thursday afternoons, when dry! Our highlight being our autumn visit to Mount Stewart. Numbers may have been few, at times but continuity and friendship maintained. We now eagerly await the brighter evenings ahead when we change to walking on Mondays in the early evening. Hopefully we will start on Monday 10th April at 6.30pm. Further details will be given in church nearer the time or please feel free to contact Helen on 07751 795044 if you would like to join in. You will be very welcome.

A Visit to the Foodbank

On Monday, 9th January, a wet and cold day, about twenty members of MWI met in the Reception room of Bangor Foodbank and Community Support (BFCS) and were welcomed by Ken Scott, Project Manager who thanked us for coming and for the support from Donaghadee Methodist Church for the foodbank.

After coffee, Ken gave us a talk about the foodbank. BFCS was born out of a simple desire to provide a one stop shop that would throw a vital lifeline to those in need with all those sections of the community working together. Thanks to the local support network of businesses, churches and individuals BFCS has provided for at risk families, the elderly and individuals across the Borough. As a member of the Trussell Trust Network that extends across the UK. Volunteers come from all walks of life. This includes previous users who all complete a comprehensive programme. BFCS also

work closely with a wide range of frontline service providers including Community Advice, Sure Start, Housing Executive, Health and Social Care staff, Community Associations, the Simon Community, Women's Aid, North Down Community Network, Ards and North Down Policing, Community Safety Partnership and Ards and North Down Borough Council.

Working in conjunction with BFCS these frontline services providers act as foodbank referral agents to ensure the resources are directed to those most in need. These care professionals issue their clients with a foodbank voucher which entitles them to receive a foodbank parcel of three days nutritionally balanced non-perishable foods. Clients will gain access to BFCS five foundation pillars: Food Matters, Life Skills Matter, Money Matters, Living Well Matters and Youth Matters.

Ken then gave us a conducted tour through the spacious building. We went through different rooms where they had different meetings for Women's Aid, Sure Start, Youth Drop In Centre and Mencap. There was a Boardroom for training sessions, Baby First Aid, cookery classes, etc. The Baby Room had clothes and nursery items. The Food Warehouse had all foods where tins are to be checked for dates and damages , where parcels are made up for singles and couples and those with dietary issues. They had tinned meats, hot dogs, pies ,pasta, rice, tinned potatoes, etc., which can make a good meal. They also have a baby food area and even a pet food area for those who have pets. There is a cookery demonstration room where students to learn how to cook basic meals. ASDA has given them a freezer and also 155 slow cookers to give out to people to help them cook in their homes. The last room was a Welcome Centre where Mencap help people

searching for jobs, give advice on money, health and addiction. Rooms for computer training, arts and crafts and music are in the making for future plans.

When I came home and thought over what I had seen and heard it really is wonderful . It all started in 2019 and I believe God’s hand has been in this from the start. I came across this verse: “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”. Matthew 5:16.

BFCS is a light shining in these dark days. You will always get greedy and needy people in this world but it’s good to help the needy.

June Herron, MWI

Connect Christian Counselling Service

During 2022-23, Connect’s team of very dedicated volunteers, supported by our management board, have continued to provide a much-needed professional counselling service to the community.

We currently have nine counsellors and four administration staff, who commit to providing this valuable service on a weekly basis. Each counsellor has between two and six clients at any one time and yet we cannot keep up with the demand for our service; consequently, we usually have a waiting list.

Many of our clients are referred to us by the NHS, from GP’s and mental health practitioners but also by word of mouth from

previous clients. We can now accept referrals in the 16 – 18 year age group.

We very much appreciate the use of the Donaghadee Methodist Church premises and want to thank the members of the church for their practical support. Many of the local churches, organisations and individuals contribute regularly to support our work financially and this enables us to see clients who could not afford private counselling sessions. Many of our clients do give donations if they can afford to do so. God has continually provided for all our needs, and we give Him all the glory.

Our main overhead is for monthly counsellor supervision which is required to maintain professional qualification. Then of course we have normal running costs for telephone, light / heat and office sundries.

If possible, Connect arranges bi-annual training mornings for the team, as all counsellors must maintain a certain number of continuous professional development hours, to maintain the required degree of proficiency for professional practice.

Connect has had almost 930 clients since opening in 2003, and we are planning a thanksgiving service in May, to celebrate our 20th anniversary.

The Lord has given us a vision for Connect as a ministry to bring wholeness to hurting people. We appreciate your support and prayers for the continuing work of Connect.

George Thompson,
Director of Counselling

Men's Breakfast

On Saturday 12th November the men held another breakfast and visit. This time the group made their way to east Belfast and to the museum of Orange Heritage. Everyone enjoyed their breakfast and even better with a cuppa. Afterwards we were all given a guided tour of the museum. This was a very interesting visit with some of the group learning more about the history of the Orange Order. There will be more visits planned for the coming months so please keep an eye on the church announcements. Or if you have an idea of what we could do please get in touch with Andrew.



Our toddler leaders, including a member of staff from Homestart Northdown with our special guest after our Christmas party.



Lay Leader Tom Wilson, the President and Rev Louise McKee