

Secretary's Report for the Year 2010

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The year 2010 was quite significant in the denominational calendar. Historically some controversy began in the Presbyterian Church during the late 17th Century as congregations began to split over the issue of subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith. In Ballyclare after lengthy argument those who wished to remain subscribed broke away from the church in the early 19th Century and formed another congregation, now Ballyclare Presbyterian Church. The old church, remained part of the non-subscribers, forming part of the Remonstrant Synod in 1830, and combining with the opposed Antrim Presbytery in 1910 to form the General Synod of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

As 2010 was the centenary of the General Synod, the denomination wished to celebrate by organising various events which many in this congregation attended. Although our sense of family within the Ballyclare church is important, it is also beneficial for the congregation to realise their place within the denomination and to participate in the wider church.

Baptisms

19.09.10 Izaak Stephen Harson
Son of Victoria and Stephen Harson

Marriages

No marriages were celebrated during 2010.

Deaths

21.02.10 Mrs Christina Bogles
04.06.10 Mrs Sarah Jane (Jean) Fears
15.11.10 Mr Samuel Alexander Forsythe
30.11.10 Mrs Joyce Forsythe

The prayers and sympathy of the committee go to those who have suffered bereavement during the past year.

Special Services and Events

Praise Service

A praise service was held on Sunday 14th February at 7:00 pm with Larne concert Choir. The Rev Colin Campbell led the service and the offering was in aid of the Women's League appeal. The lovely service was followed by supper kindly provided by the Ladies

Easter Service

The Easter Service on April 4th was conducted by Rev Campbell.

Communion Services

Holy Communion was celebrated during May and December.

All 3 of the recently appointed elders have now participated in helping with the Communion Service.

Children's Day

This was held on 20th June 2010 and was led by Matthew McIlrath. The children did us proud as they sang "Jesus' love is very wonderful" and "Our God is a great big God" especially as many of the children are quite young. Rev Campbell gave the Children's Sermon and presented the many prizes that Ballyclare had won in the denominational competitions. Thanks and presentations were also made to the Sunday school staffs

"Back to Church" Service

A special service on 26th September was held to encourage members who had not been out for a while, and other friends to join us for morning worship. Billy Livingstone sang two lovely solos to add to the occasion.

The service was conducted by Rev Campbell and it was nice to welcome visitors to the church and to the schoolroom afterwards for refreshments.

Harvest Thanksgiving

The Harvest Service took place on Sunday 10th October at 10.15 am and was led by Rev Jim Campbell. The Choir's Introit "God of the pastures, hear our prayer" was lovely as different parts were sung by male and female choir members. In their rendition of "Vaster far than any ocean" the blending of their voices brought a poignancy to the piece while they excelled with "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace". The children of the Sunday school also sang "God almighty set a rainbow" and Adam Surgenceor read "Harvest Mouse".

Rev Jim Campbell gave us an uplifting message as he commented on harvest and our daily bread, about dependency on God and Jesus as the bread of life. He explained how we must always remember Gods promise that he will make us rich enough to be generous at all times.

The church was beautifully decorated with flowers in every window and the communion table festooned with flowers, bread and fruit was a truly welcoming sight. Afterwards gifts of flowers were sent to members of the congregation unable to attend.

Our thanks to everyone who helped and contributed towards this service.

Christmas Service

Again at Christmas the church was splendidly decorated. The ladies each made a beautifully decorated wreath to be placed in the windows and on the Communion table.

On December 19th the Family Service was introduced by Cathy Warnock with “The Christmas Life”. During the service the choir sang some lovely pieces, “Bring your torches” and “Cradled in a manger meanly” while the Sunday school delighted everyone with “Ten little Christmas trees”. Tom Green, Sam Harson, Matthew McIlrath and Wilson Forsythe read of the shepherds, wise men and the innkeeper of Bethlehem while Vanessa Surgeneor, Mary Surgeneor and Sarah Buchannan told of the 3 ages of a woman at Christmas.

Adam Surgeneor led the congregation in prayer.

The service proceeded unannounced and Rev Colin Campbell read the announcements and gave the benediction.

Gifts were left under the tree for the Salvation Army to distribute.

Candlelit Service

As is usual there was a Candlelit Service on Christmas Eve. Attendance was perhaps not as large as in previous years. However this was understandable due to the severity of the snow and ice – though the Church certainly looked very picturesque.

This service is always something to look forward to, a special time when the shopping is finished, the worrying is done, the chores completed and the real Christmas begins as we turn our thoughts to the miracle of the birth of a baby so long ago who changed the world.

Traditional carols were sung, the Christmas story told in readings by Evelyn Meharg, Kathleen Campbell, Vanessa Surgeneor and Irene Campbell. Heather Walker sang 2 solos which were delightful and added to a really lovely service.

Michael Alexander joined the congregation as in previous years and this year Sarah McIlrath also played a solo on the clarinet, “Silent Night” a very evocative rendition! As everyone left the Church, Rev Campbell gave each person a Christingle which was carried lighted, along the path to the Sunday school room. A wonderful sight in the snow clad grounds. Drinks, mince pies and shortbread were then enjoyed.

Social Events

Romanian Trip

Rev Campbell went to Romania at the end of January 2010. He was supported by the congregation who gave donations and helped raise money - through events such as the table quiz in Sept '09 so that £350 was added to what he already had. – This was to help support orphanages and local community projects.

Women’s World Day of Prayer

Women’s World day of Prayer was on 5th March and the service was prepared by the women of Cameroon. The theme was “Let Everything That Has Breath Praise The Lord”. Often these services allow us a glimpse of a way of life, a country, and a

culture so very different from our own yet where women strive, like ourselves to live lives in the presence of God.

1st Ballyeaston Presbyterian Church hosted the service and provided a lovely supper afterwards.

Table Quiz

A table quiz took place on 11th March and was, as is usual, hotly contended. The evening was very enjoyable as teams pitted their wits against each other but all in the spirit of fun and craic. Refreshments were served and the money raised went to charity.

Christian Aid Week

Christian aid Week ran from 9th – 15th May and donation envelopes were left in the pews. Coffee and scones were served after morning service on the 16th May. In the Ballyclare area the total amount raised was £8530.

While this is a fantastic effort it must be noted that following the catastrophic disaster in Haiti at the beginning of the year retiring offerings were taken on the last 2 Sundays in January to forward to Christian Aid or the Disaster Emergency committee. In August the congregation again contributed to Christian Aid when Sarah Meharg arranged coffee and scones following morning service as she was running the Great North Run in support of this organisation.

Congregational Outing

The Congregational Outing was arranged by Ethel Logan and was a lovely evening helped by the fine weather. Church members visited Donegore Parish Church where they were able to admire the grounds in the evening sunshine before venturing inside to hear a very interesting talk on the history of the church given by Mrs Margaret Bell.

On leaving the beautiful old church we then stopped for a most appetising supper at Donegore Garden Centre followed by a demonstration on planting a hanging basket. A lovely time was had by all.

Treasure Hunt

A treasure hunt was held on Friday 27th August. Irene and Jackie Campbell organised the clues and those that we didn't get - at least gave participants a laugh. Over £120 was raised for the Romanian fund and it is hoped that some young members of our congregation may go to Romania in 2011.

Centenary Celebrations

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the General Synod of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church a number of events were held throughout the denomination. A series of 4 talks, with discussion and questions on non-subscribing in the 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, was given in different churches. The Very Rev Bill McMillan in Dunmurry 24th January 2010, Rev Dr David Steer in Dromore

on 14th March, Rev Dr Scott Peddie in Templepatrick on 16th May and Dr John Nelson here in Ballyclare on 21st February. Rev Dr Nelson spoke on the controversies in the Presbyterian Churches in the 19th Century and the talk was well attended. Each of the lectures was recorded so that a DVD would be available on our church history.

For the children 3 separate events were organised. The youngest members visited Streamvale Farm, Dundonald on Saturday 8th May.

During the annual Sunday School Exhibition and prize-giving in Comber a Bar-B-Que was organised in the church grounds and each child was presented with a souvenir.

The final event for the oldest children was an afternoon at Belfast Activity Centre on 25th September.

These events culminated with a grand centenary dinner on Friday 22nd October at the Belfast Harbour Commissioner's Office, a truly spectacular venue.

Over 100 guests attended including distinguished representatives from the Presbyterian, Methodist, Church of Ireland, Roman Catholic churches and the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. The Lord Mayor of Belfast, Cllr. Patrick Convery was also in attendance. The occasion was very relaxed and friendly and we had a really lovely evening.

Fund Raising

Following the sale of the congregational calendars, compiled and organised by Jeanette McKendry, a cheque for £750 was presented to Mrs Patricia McCadden in aid of the Children's Hospice.

Rev Colin Campbell collected for the Black Santa appeal in Ballyclare which raised £1200.

Women's Group

The Women's Group continue to meet on the 3rd Monday of each month and play a large part in the hospitality within the church.

During the year invitations to social events in Glenarm church and Ballycarry were attended and the ladies also visited the manse in October for stew and a floral demonstration. Their newly acquired floral skills enabled them to make beautiful Christmas decorations for the church windows.

On Sunday 28th November the ladies organised and cooked lunch, a very convivial affair with stew, a variety of desserts and tea or coffee. This raised £300 for charity.

We would extend our sincere thanks to the Women's Group who are always willing and helpful in every event.

Property and Investments

The ongoing maintenance and repairs of the church property remains a priority. The Session House has during the past year been a matter for planning and debate and it

was decided to refurbish it as it has now been empty for some time. Planning permission has been sought and approved for change of use to allow business activities to be undertaken and plans are being developed to update the premises, retaining the outside façade as it is, but renovating the interior. It is hoped to turn the house into an exhibition or office space. Inevitably this will cost quite an amount and fund raising will need to be undertaken. Any ideas for this should be passed on to the Committee.

Thanks

May I, on behalf of the congregation, sincerely thank the Rev Campbell for his leadership, teaching and support. We are very appreciative of his willingness and cheerfulness, and his quiet words and understanding prayers in our times of trouble and need have helped many in the church through difficult times.

May I also thank his wife Kathleen for her support in the church and through the Women's group. She is always there to work and help at the various events in the church.

I would also like to thank Trevor Forsythe. The Church is extremely fortunate to have Trevor's commitment to the ongoing financial work and especially in having to compile the Financial Report.

Mrs Jacqueline Crooks and Mary Surgeneor are also hugely supportive to our children in the Sunday school by providing infinite patience and care.

To our organists, Mrs Ethel Logan and Mr Wilson Forsythe, I would like to thank you, not only for your playing each week but also for the many special services that you make so enjoyable and for the many other duties you take on so willingly.

Many thanks to our representative Elder, Mr Pat Blair, who despite his own health concerns has attended many meetings, within the denomination, on our behalf. Many thanks also to Mrs Jeanette McKendry, our meetings' secretary.

My thanks also to the Women's Group who consistently help with the catering arrangements and give their continued support to the Church. They decorate the Church at Harvest and Christmas-time, they regularly provide tea and coffee after morning service and are wonderful in raising money for the various charities supported by the congregation.

May I also mention Mrs Mary Surgeneor for her care in the upkeep of the church. I would like to extend our sincere thanks to the elders and members of the Church Committee for their continued commitment and dedication. It is a pleasure to work with this group.

To all those who give of their time to support the church in all the various little jobs which get done, we are sincerely thankful.

That Mr Chairman concludes the Secretary's report.