

Spring 2025



*Donaghadee Methodist
Church Magazine*

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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
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Editorial

The Winter just passed has been quite mild but although we are now officially in springtime the weather seems not to have realised that and we have as much rainfall as ever.

Jenny's article reminded me so much of my own nursing days. Many times, I came off duty a tearful wreck having not done anything right all day and sister's wrath seemed to concentrate on me. I also know all about the downstairs room windows!

I'd like to thank all the contributors for the articles they sent in for this magazine I hope you enjoy them.

It is now approaching Easter, a very significant time in the church calendar, a time to reflect on what Jesus did for us. This year Louise set us a task to write some scripture verses during lent, this exercise has focused the mind on the meaning of Easter.

Please keep those articles coming!

Every blessing.

Mary



Ministers letter

Spring has finally sprung!

It is always a relief and very encouraging when the earth emerges from its winter slumber. The days are getting longer with lighter evenings. There are signs of life as gardens come to life once more. The grass is growing and hearing the drone of lawnmowers in the background becomes normal again. Flowers are blossoming with bursts of yellow daffodils and colourful crocus. Farmers as busy as ever have been ploughing the fields behind us and the garden is full of birds and even the odd squirrel. This past week I managed to plant some potatoes, always warned by my dad that they have to be planted by St Patricks day!

God created the world for us and us for the world through his immeasurable love. It is funny how this change in the seasons can affect us as humans. Our ancestors lived by the seasons so much more than we do now in a time that anything, fruit or vegetable is available anytime you want it. Electricity and technology means that we still take part in activities even in the darkest winter nights.

As a church we follow the rhythm of the church calendar and time seems to pass even quicker every year with the many activities and events we are involved with. When I last wrote we had celebrated harvest and were approaching Christmas. We currently find ourselves in the Lenten season as we journey to Jerusalem and to the cross with Jesus. Hopefully you have been finding the scripture writing

devotional a useful and different way to engage with scripture during this particular season.

We look ahead to Holy Week when we will once more remember the most amazing story, we have heard so many times and yet never tire of because of how much it means to us. The story that changes all our lives because of the love, grace and mercy shown to us by God, Father, Son & Holy Spirit at Easter. May we never grow tired of hearing it, and may we never take what it means for granted. It is the reason we come together as a church, as a community. It is the reason we do what we do, gathering for worship, studying the bible, meeting in fellowship and socially. It is the reason we seek to help others in our community and across the globe and I want to thank you for your generosity in so many ways. Together, we can make a profound difference, not only in our church but also in the world around us.

As you read through this magazine you will find a range of articles from different people. Some regarding the business of the church and some personal reflective pieces. Thank you to everyone who has contributed and to everyone who contributes to life of the church in any way as we can only exist as a community that works together.

I am grateful for each and every one of you, for the ways you serve, give, and love. May God continue to bless you abundantly.

Celebrating and Reminiscing

On Saturday, 24th August 2024, I met for afternoon tea with 4 friends on the top floor of the Grand Central Hotel, Belfast.

We wanted to celebrate the fact that it was 60 years ago on 24th August 1964 that we had all first met up in one of the Nurses Homes at the Ulster Hospital Dundonald to begin our training to become registered sick children's nurses.

A lot of reminiscing was done over afternoon tea that Saturday and so I thought I would share with you some of my memories!

On our first day after being issued with our uniforms and learning how to make up, and wear properly, or starched caps we were taken over to the adjacent School of Nursing. There we would begin the 12 weeks of learning the “basics” Before we would be allowed to work on the wards and with patients. This time was known as being a preliminary training school (PTS) And each new group of student nurses starting training was given a number my group was the 6th to begin training since the Ulster Hospital for women and children had moved to Dundonald from Templemore Ave and so we were collectively known as “PTS 6”.

While in PTS we learned about anatomy and Physiology, how to take a patient's temperature and pulse, how to bath a baby and changes nappy. We also were instructed in how to make our beds with “hospital corners” – A lot of time was spent practising that. Included on the timetable where several sessions teaching us how to achieve and maintain a scrupulously clean and tidy environment in which to care for our patients - The importance of this being something emphasised many years ago by Florence Nightingale herself in her “Notes on nursing”.

Our ability to do this was monitored when we began work on the wards. Matron carried out a ward round of all the wards of the hospital every day - Ostensibly to check on the condition of our patients. However, she always took the opportunity to check if the Patient's bedside lockers had been properly damp dusted - Not by the ward cleaner but by the most junior student nurse on the ward whose responsibility it was in those days! Matron was not averse to running her finger over the surface to check for dust! The cleaning skills I learned in PTS were to prove very useful after I had qualified as I worked for many years as a staff nurse in the operating theatre- An area where ensuring cleanliness was vitally important. Eventually I was to be promoted and tasked with setting up and managing an Infection control Specialist Nursing Team in the Trust.

While in PTS and indeed for the whole three years we were student nurses, we were required to live in the nurse's home on site. This was initially a bit of a shock for an only child like me but I came to really love the camaraderie. Over those three years we laughed together and also cried with each other. When we had a bad day on the wards, with the ward sister giving us a hard time about something! Also, we did fall out with each other every now and then too!

The home wardens were very very strict - We had to be in before 10:30 PM with lights out at 11:00 PM! A late pass was to 12 midnight and then only permitted twice in each month. However, those student nurses with ground floor bedrooms were very popular One could sometimes be persuaded to leave their window on the latch for latecomers. I can't remember which hole on the neighbouring Knock Golf Course was the closest to an open window after dark.

Nursing sick children in hospital was very different in the 1960s from what it is today.

The children were kept in hospital for lengthy periods, and parents were only allowed on the ward for a couple of hours each afternoon. We all became very good at comforting upset children when mum was asked to leave the ward. Most of us got very attached to a particular child they were caring for. Thankfully never the same one as another nurse as there might have been an argument over who would feed a certain baby

Most of us would end up buying little gifts for our child when they were eventually discharged. I remember going to a student nurses association conference in London and bringing back from Hamley's one of the very latest James Bond dinky cars. This was for a lovely young teenage boy with asthma who seemed to spend most of the winter in hospital.

Like many other long-term patients, he went to school while in hospital, there was a large area set up as a classroom at the end of the ward with dedicated teaching stuff and children of school age who were well enough to be taken there each morning, for lessons for most of the day. Even the long stay orthopaedic children were pushed to school in their beds complete with all the weights and cords attached to their traction equipment.

With working on different wards etc and off duty times varying our group was fragmented a bit. We all look forward to the four-week study block each year when, though there was studying to be done again and weekly tests and an end of block exam to pass, PTS 6 was all together again!

Eventually finals loomed and after a lot of hard work seven of our original group of 13 passed! We went different ways after qualifying - I went to Belfast City hospital as a post registration student nurse for just over 2 years to add a general (adult) Nursing qualification (SRN) To my sick children's registration (RSCN),

Once “dual qualified” I returned to the Ulster hospital where I worked until my retirement in 2004.

Out of this 7 sadly one “girl” has passed away and for many years another one has “dropped off the radar”.

The remaining 5 have kept in touch over the years. The young teenage girls who started nursing 60 years ago are now all grandmothers and grandchildren already going to university.

Contact was sporadic over the years after we all married. Our lives got very busy as we brought up our own children and later cared for elderly relatives. However, most of us also managed to work part time and various health care facilities sadly two of our number have become widows.

Once we all had retired there was time to meet up with each other again and we have had some great “reunions”. These included all five of us attending the fantastic reunion in 2022 for over 200 nurses who had trained or worked at the Ulster in the 60 years since it moved to Dundonald. We met up with some of the ward sisters whose wards we had worked on as student nurses and found they weren't quite as terrifying as we remembered.

By the time of the first lockdown in 2020 we all had acquired smartphones and had learned to use WhatsApp. A WhatsApp group

called PTS 6 was then established. We have group chats most nights now and I love these!!!

Also, the three of us who lived close to Newtownards – in Comber, East Belfast and Bangor - Meet there every so often for a lengthy lunch.

Our 4th member lives in Portrush and always said she felt she missed out on these lunches so we agreed to go to Portrush for lunch one day

Off we went all armed with smart travel passes and we had a great day out! You will have heard of Jerome K Jerome's "Three men in a boat" – we were "Three old ladies" on the train that day.

Conscious that it was fast approaching our diamond anniversary our WhatsApp chats involved discussion of what we would do to celebrate the occasion.

The eventual decision was that we would treat ourselves to afternoon tea and the Grand Central hotel in Belfast and so all the plans were made. We were all delighted that our fifth member agreed to travel from her home in Lichfield to be with us.

On the day fabulous food was enjoyed by all in the very special surroundings of the observatory on the top floor of the hotel with amazing views over Belfast Lough from the floor length windows.

Lots of memories of our years as student nurses were shared and we laughed details of the mischief that we got up to in the nurses' home. We also caught up with news of each other's families. It all added up to a most enjoyable afternoon.

As we left to come home all of us were clutching our little boxes (aka doggy bags) with some of the goodies we hadn't been able to finish we were too busy talking.

Sharing the lift with us, going back down to the ground floor, a lady enquired what we had been celebrating. When we told her the reason she replied saying “None of you look that old”!!!

Her remark just made an excellent afternoon out seem even better for PTS 6.

Jenny Watson



Church Finance

2024 Church Finances

First of all, I would like to thank everyone for their help and support in 2024, my first year as treasurer:

Reverend Louise, the Church Council, and, of course, the count teams. All have helped me greatly throughout the year. A special thanks to Kit for his continuing support and advice. Grace and I would also thank the congregation for their kindness and friendship towards us. It's been a pleasure to get to know many of you.

As I said at the Congregational meeting this month the church is usually very close to breaking even financially. It doesn't take much to create a slight surplus, or, conversely, a deficit.

2024 saw a £10k deficit after a £5k surplus the previous year.

Reasons for this:

In 2023 we had a legacy donation of £10,000.

Weekly offerings were down slightly in 2024.

Gift Aid receipts were lower as a result of the lower offerings.

Church maintenance in 2024 was up
(new windows, woodworm treatment).

We received £10k in 2024 from a maturing investment which meant the total bank balance at the year-end was unchanged from the previous year-end.

Of course, 2025 will be very different due to large expenditures on the church building as explained by Maurice at the meeting.

The church investments had a very healthy 2024. The Global and Ethical funds increased by 8% and 5.7% respectively. This will help fund the repairs and maintenance the church is undertaking.

Chris Mayor
March 2025

Property Update (March 2025)

The congregation will be aware that the Campbell and Thompson rooms in No 8 Moat Street, have been out of use for quite some time now. Unfortunately, these rooms have been affected by dry rot, which is a serious type of fungal decay. It attacks timber in buildings and if left untreated it can lead to structural damage.

This is likely to have started with blocked gutters, downpipes and issues with lead flashings over an extended period of time.

Essential works are required to deal with the root cause and prevent the dry rot spreading throughout the building. Work is substantial and all 3 floors of No 8 Moat Street have been impacted, which requires extensive internal and external work.

Areas were initially treated for dry rot last year, however it has reappeared and following discussions with Church Council, O'Prey Developments Ltd were brought in as a main contractor. They commenced work on No 8 Moat Street in January 2025.

Works to date include the following:



Internal Works

All internal opening up and preparation work has been completed to ground floor, 1st & 2nd floors (Campbell Room. Thompson Room and top floor). Specialist treatment has been carried out. All timber lintels have been replaced with concrete lintels to front elevation and all joists to 1st & 2nd floors have been cut back, spliced and infilled with new treated joists. A metal lathing system and insulation has been fitted to walls, with electrics diverted and reconnected and the ground floor screed has been reinstated.

New UPVC sliding sash windows are planned to be installed before Easter, which will then permit the internal walls and ceilings to be boarded and skimmed.



External Works

Scaffolding has been erected to the front and rear of the property. Lead flashing repairs to the chimney and slate repairs to the high-level roof have been completed. The slate verges to high roof at the front and the low roof at the rear have been extended and the chimneys repaired. New guttering has been fitted to the rear of the building.

Works to extend the slate verges to the high-level roof at the rear elevation, new horizontal lead flashing to the front elevation and roof repairs to the Church and hall will be undertaken in the next few weeks. Following this work the front façade of No 8 will be painted.

All construction works are due to be completed by the end of April 2025, but of course this is subject to weather and drying out. The Campbell and Thompson rooms will then be repainted and carpeted.

Future Works

Maintenance and repair works to the Church buildings are never complete!

The front of the Church and hall will be painted this year and a new gas boiler is required for the hall as it is now very unreliable.

Also, on the 'to do list' is plaster repairs to the Church internal walls, at the balcony level and a new ceiling in the Church.

Maurice Wray
Property Steward

MWI

We rounded up our winter programme with our annual MWI service on 23rd of March. Our members took an active part and Judith Weir, our speaker, encouraged us for our year ahead. Our final get together for a meal was at lunch time in Grace Neill's on Monday 7th April. We invited some extra friends to join us as we are all Methodist Women!

We meet at 1.30pm on the first Monday of the month from October to April and usually have around 15 to 20 ladies attending. We have a varied programme and you would be very welcome to join us at any time.

Our first meeting of our new season will be Monday 6th October and details will be displayed nearer the time on the notice board in the church or on a poster in the Moat St church window.

Walking Group

Now that we are in summer time and brighter evenings lie ahead, we meet on Mondays at 6.30pm usually starting off from Crommelin Park. However, we do try to have a few varied walks, weather permitting of course! Sometimes a visit to Ballywalter beach or Bangor coastal path among others. We keep in touch for weekly arrangements. you would be very welcome to join us.
Please feel free to be in touch. My number is 07751 795044
Helen Johnston

Counselling

Another year has passed and Connect has continued to provide a professional counselling service, free of charge, to the community. We have had another very busy year, with 79 clients being seen, although some are still awaiting allocation. There have been 1038 people request our services since opening in May 2003. We have a dedicated team of volunteers who are supported by a management board drawn from the local churches.

There are presently 9 counsellors and 4 administration staff, seeing clients weekly on Tuesday / Thursday evenings and Friday morning. Each counsellor can have up to 6 clients ongoing at any one time. Referrals come from GP's, mental health professionals and of course self-referrals; usually coming on the recommendation of past clients. We see clients from 16 years old up. We need) to pay for monthly external supervision for many of our counsellors and other running costs. We are so grateful to the Lord for His provision and for the continued support given to our work, from our community. This year Donaghadee Primary School held a concert, supported by the Donaghadee Male Voice Choir, and donated all the proceeds to Connect.

We very much appreciate the use of the Donaghadee Methodist Church premises and want to thank the members of the church for this practical support for the work. Other churches, organisations and individuals have also given generously to maintain our service for those unable to afford counselling. We are grateful for all their support for this ministry.

The Lord gave a vision to ladies of this church for Connect as a ministry to bring wholeness to hurting people. We are carrying this vision on into 2025 and appreciate your continued support and prayers for the work of Connect.

George Thompson

MY LIFE IN THE FIRE BRIGADE

It all began one night, I was just home from work in the Berkshire factory, and was sitting eating my dinner when a knock came to the door. My wife answered it and said "It is George Aiken. He wants to see you." I thought it maybe was a wee electrical job he needed done.

George said, "I have a form for you to fill in," to which I replied. "What's it about?" "To join the fire brigade. We need men like you, get it filled in and bring it down to the station next week".

So, after a bit of thought and discussion with my wife I took the form down and two weeks later I had an interview at the station, with George and an officer from headquarters. Having passed the interview, next was a medical with my doctor, which I also passed and then started my training.

Running out hoses, climbing ladders, this went on for 13 Thursday nights which was drill night at the station, from 8:00 to 10:00. I then I had to do a breathing apparatus course with this all done I was handed my alerter, and now I was on call standing there as proud as a peacock.

In my time in the brigade which total 27 years we had to deal with all kinds of calls, chimney fires but also sad calls like people and children being killed in a traffic accident or people being burnt out of their house and home with just the clothes on their back. Many times, it wasn't all grief and tears when you save someone's life. Or when you save someone's house from burning down or cutting people out of the wrecked car.

I am very thankful to my wife and children, sometimes we were just ready to go somewhere and the alerter would go off, and maybe I'd be out for the rest of the day. Also, I would have left for work in the morning around 7:00 and perhaps get a call on the way home and did not get to see my children that day but nonetheless I do not regret the night George called round with the form and I was able to serve my community.

John Wright

MY FAVOURITE HYMN

My Favourite hymn is Guide Me Oh Thou Great Jehovah (Redeemer), I prefer Jehovah but it is just a matter of choice.

The author William Williams was Welsh so originally it was written in Welsh and translated in 1771 by Peter Williams. The tune to which we usually sing this hymn is called Cwm Rhonda.

In 1744, Having been accused of several misdemeanours against the Church of England Williams devoted himself to Methodism, and undoubtedly became the most famous Methodist Welsh hymn writer. Cwm Rhonda, was composed in 1907, and required the last line of each verse to be repeated when translated into English.

This hymn is used for funerals and also for weddings. The most famous funeral it was used for was Princess Diana, and lately it was used at the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton. But it is often sung at church services.

If you have a favourite hymn, please share it with us.

The best way to listen to this hymn is to find a good male voice choir and down load it. It's even better if you can find a good Welsh male voice choir.

Mary Todd



