

DONAGHADEE METHODIST CHURCH



Harvest Festival at the Kennedy Farm

Autumn 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 cover shows (left to right) Kathryn McDaid (Circuit Steward), Rev. Louise McKee and the Rev Alan Craig, who preached at our Harvest Festival on 17th September

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Editorial

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the Magazine. We haven't had an issue since February , so we have much to look back on. I am grateful to Andrew for his photos of the tree-planting and to Geraldine for the photograph of the boat which we look after. It looks lovely and we congratulate the people who tend it . It is also good to have a picture of the Easter cross. Do you remember on Good Friday it was filled with pebbles representing worries, troubles and griefs and then on Sunday we transformed it into a blaze of flowers?

Thank you to all who contributed to this issue. We will miss Bert who could always be relied upon to write an article and we wish him every blessing in his new home. We remember his wife Sheelagh with affection. We remember the death of John Wright's brother, Philip and send our sympathy to the family circle.

Thanks to Grace Taggart for her article on the Harvest; we hope she will become a regular contributor. We welcome the poem from Martha who lives in the Imperial and to June and Christine for recording the Church outing.

We look forward to the Winter's work and Ladies, don't forget the opening meeting of the MWI.

But we couldn't close without congratulating 'Connect' Christian Counselling on its twenty years' service.. The meal which concluded the celebrations was memorable. The owners of the "Saints and Sinners" restaurant opened their new

premises in The Parade specially for the event, although it had not yet opened to the public.

Keep the contributions coming and we wish you God's richest blessings.

The Editor

Minister's letter

As I write this, Summer (if you can call it that) has ended and we are fast moving towards Autumn. The nights are drawing in fast; the evenings and mornings are a little misty. And so, the movement of time and the seasons continue, as they say, time and tide wait for no one.

Hopefully you were able to enjoy the summer, even if it was one of the wettest on record! Andrew and I certainly enjoyed welcoming many of you to the manse as we shared in afternoon tea with our class groups. It was good to share in fellowship and conversation in slightly different groups to what we would normally meet. Unfortunately, the last group were unable to meet as we had COVID. We don't seem to hear so much about COVID these days, but it is very much still with us, and I would urge you to remain vigilant as the colder weather approaches. We all enjoy greeting one another but, in a desire, to keep everyone safe I suggest that we refrain from shaking hands and hugging for the time

being. I understand life needs to go on, but we do need to look out for one another in any way that we can.

Since our last magazine we have had a busy session including celebrating Easter and celebrating the Coronation of King Charles III with a Big Lunch. It's important that we honour our civic leaders and honour our Royal family. But as Yahweh told Samuel in the Old Testament, he is the one true God who should be bowed down to. Christ is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

We look forward to the new session beginning with a joint bible study with our friends in Bangor led by Dr Alan Meenan who is very experienced both here in Northern Ireland and the United States. We will be looking at the topic of 'The Gospel in the Old Testament'. This will be a wonderful opportunity for study, fellowship and forging friendships with our brothers and sisters in Bangor. Once this six-week study has come to an end in October we will continue with our own rhythm of bible study and house groups. We may also include some more 'Prayer & Praise' evenings as they seemed to be enjoyed during the Summer. We also look forward to welcoming back our Toddler group after the summer break. We have already had families asking when we would be starting back which is very encouraging. We are always looking for people to help out on the odd occasion so if you would be interested in being involved speak to me or to Kathryn. Finally we look forward to

starting the new session of with fellowship and worship as we celebrate 'Harvest on the Farm' with Rev Alan Craig who will be returning to join us.

We continue to pray that God will lead us as a congregation and as a community together.

Rev Louise McKee

New beginnings

I am sitting writing this in Scotland having made the journey over with Calum who is now in his final year at university. Erin has just turned eighteen. I am in my first year as Circuit Steward. We are all at a new beginning in our lives. This made me think about how we as a church family in Donaghadee Methodist Church are at the beginning of a new church year and look forward to what the new year brings as organisations start to plan their new schedules and think about meeting as friends together both old and new.

For me in my new role I am greeting the new year with a mixture of fear and excitement. I have a very big pair of shoes to fill following the retirement of Geraldine and I thank her for her support and advice as I settle in to the responsibilities of church life as Circuit Steward. I am also thankful for your support and encouragement as a congregation and ask that you please bear with me as I discover what my new role entails and forgive me for my

mistakes as I am sure there have been and will be many along the way.

While organisations have had a break during the summer months the church has remained active in bringing people together both in fellowship and praise. We have come together in our midweek prayer and praise services and Louise has opened the manse to every class group for afternoon tea which has given people the opportunity to chat to one another in a setting other than after church on a Sunday. We also had a very successful outing to the St Patrick Centre in Downpatrick, Saul Church and the Cathedral and my thanks to those involved in the organisation of the trip.

Since becoming a member of this church congregation I have been struck by the welcome given to those who are new and the strength of fellowship people share with each other has been evident in the times of meeting together over the summer. The start of a new church year provides further opportunity for this to happen and I look forward to sharing it with you all.

*Kathryn McDaid,
Circuit Steward*

Harvest Thanksgiving Service on the Farm

Sunday 17 September 2023 started grey and wet. Around 90 people gathered in James' and Christine's barn for the annual

Harvest Thanksgiving service with the Rev Alan Craig preaching, to be followed by a barbecue and sweet treats. There were people from other churches in the congregation, notably Ballyholme Methodist and Moira Church of Ireland, and an atmosphere of excitement and expectation. The barn was decorated with balloons, vintage tractors, baler & bicycle, pumpkins, milk urn and straw bales, all festooned with fairy lights. It wasn't long before aromas from the barbecue outside came wafting into the shed.

In our opening prayer, Rev Louise reminded us that we need the rain for the Harvest. Kathryn's reading from Matthew 13 v 1 – 23, The Parable of the Sower, highlighted other necessary ingredients - the seed and the soil, and of course the sower.

In the children's address and the main sermon, Rev Craig expounded on two of the challenges presented to us by the passage of Scripture. For God's Word, the seed, to flourish in us, we need to be "good soil", as opposed to infertile paths, rocky or thorny places. Good soil will produce a crop, "a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown," with the involvement of the sower.

And so we come to the second challenge, to follow in the footsteps of the sower, Jesus. Rev Craig preached that we are to have the faith, energy and courage to take that initial step to sow seed into the hearts of those with whom we come into contact. We are to share the Gospel through our words and actions, letting our light shine, trusting in God always.

Some of the seed we sow will fall on the path and be eaten by birds, some will fall in rocky places and the plants will become scorched and withered by trouble or persecution and some will be choked by the weeds of worry and the deceitfulness of wealth. Some, however, will fall on good soil, and will reap a harvest of love, forgiveness and redemption.

As the Call to Worship prompted us at the very beginning of the service, we say thank you to the “God of harvest and hope, of joy and salvation for the wonders God has given to us.” In heartfelt response, may we rise to the challenge of sharing our faith and God’s Word with our fellow man, thereby bringing glory to Him. AMEN.

To everyone involved in making this Harvest Thanksgiving service such a rich and bountiful experience in so many ways, thank you.

Grace Taggart

Farewell to Bert and Sheelagh

I first met Bert 55 years ago, when he had lots of auburn hair, rode a motor bike and always had a camera close to hand. The hair colour has changed and he now drives a car, but he is still seen with a phone or camera, recording wildlife or memorable moments. Sheelagh was a social work student at Queen’s University and they were an item when Bert entered Edgehill for ministerial training in 1969. Their ministry took

them North and South of Ireland and over the years two girls and two boys were added to the family.

Bert was Minister in my home town of Portadown and we met up later when he was Minister in the Portrush circuit. Throughout their ministry Sheelagh worked in Child Psychiatry and then fostering and adoption services both North and South. She spent six years counselling university students and counselling in both NHS and private practice for more than twenty years as she balanced husband, family, church and her career. Ministry was a team calling with Sheelagh, encouraging and supporting Bert in the vision God had given them. I'm sure there were rough times when her companionship and encouragement kept him going.

Bert and Sheelagh were welcome additions to the church choir, and when it was disbanded both could be heard leading the singing if you were sitting near them. We were blessed when they decided to retire in Donaghadee and Bert stepped back into active ministry when Rev Ruth Craig was ill, and again when Rev Tom McKnight served as President of the Methodist Church in Ireland. He continued to lead a House Group and Church Bible study, chair meetings, support the men's Saturday morning breakfast and Coffee and Chat, where he could always get people involved in conversation.

Bert, we want to say how we have appreciated your teaching in Bible study and preaching and the service you have given this church over these past years since you retired.

Sadly, Sheelagh has suffered poor health and is being cared for in a nursing home, so Bert has moved to be closer to her. We thank God for their time spent with us and wish them well in the next stage of their journey.

Geraldine Chivers

Church outing to Downpatrick

On Saturday 12th August seventeen members of the church travelled by car to the St Patrick Centre, Down Cathedral and St Patrick's Church, Saul.

The St Patrick Centre is most interesting. When we arrived, we had tea or coffee and a scone in a room provided for us as we were on a guided tour to learn about St Patrick's life. Born in 400 AD he came to Ireland as a slave, kidnapped from Wales as a young boy. He became a shepherd, had a life-changing experience with God and ended up bringing Christianity to Ireland.

He died on 17th March around the year 461 AD, and it was said that the surrounding countryside was lit by hundreds of bonfires like a sea of stars to mark his passing. We are told that he is buried in the Down Cathedral grounds. A large Mourne granite slab marks the traditional burial place of St Patrick, and a wreath is laid there each St Patrick's Day. There is also a replica of the 8th Century St Patrick's High Cross, original stone fragments of which are housed in the Cathedral's entrance porch.

The traditions of St Patrick's Church, Saul, hold that St Patrick and his companions landed at the mouth of the Stanley River, a few miles from Saul, in 432 AD. The Dichu local chieftain gave him a barn for shelter, from which we get the anglicised word 'Saul'. On the site of that church, St Patrick built the first Christian church in Ireland. Patrick travelled extensively, sharing the message of Jesus Christ. We are told that, when preaching, he held the three-leafed plant known to us as the shamrock as a symbol of the three persons in one, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It was a simple way to explain the doctrine of the Trinity.

This is part of a little prayer I read in Saul that day. It would be nice to remember these words on a Sunday morning sitting in church:

Lord, you are in this place,
Fill me with your power,
Cover me with your peace,
Show me your presence.

The poem goes on:

Lord, help me to know
I am in your hands,
I am under your protection,
I am covered by your love.

Lord, I ask you today
To deliver me from evil,

To guide me in my travels,
To defend me from all harm.

Lord, give me now
Eyes to see the invisible,
Ears to hear your call,
Hands to do your work
And a heart to respond to your love.

We finished with a lovely meal before heading home. Many thanks to the organisers and drivers.

June Herron

Down Cathedral

Little is known of what the church building would have been like in the centuries between the death of St Patrick and the 11th Century, when a community of Augustinian Canons worshipped here. In 1183 John de Courcy, the Anglo-Norman, dedicated the Benedictine Abbey of Down to St Patrick. In 1316, during the invasion of Edward Bruce of Scotland, the abbey was attacked, the roof set on fire and the interior suffered extensive damage. A new abbey church was restored, but after the Reformation, when the monks left the abbey, the church fell into disrepair.

In 1609 James 1 established the Chapter of Down Cathedral and Deans and Canons were appointed. In 1787 William Annesley was appointed Dean, and with a grant of £565 from

the Marquess of Downshire and £1000 from King George III, began to restore the cathedral. The present building was opened for worship in 1818 and the tower added in 1826.

Features of note include:

The unusual wooden box pew layout;

The rare 18th Century organ with its Georgian gothic oak case;

Stained glass windows, especially the East window and the St Patrick's window;

Original capitols, which feature the work of 14th and 15th Century craftsmen;

Two stone figures dating back to the early Christian period (around 1150); and

Regimental Colours.

Historical note by Christine Kennedy

Planting trees

On Saturday 4th March, Rev Louise along with members of the church met at 10.30am at Crommelin Wood in the town to take part in the Donaghadee Community Tree Nursery, which is to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Northern Ireland.

Several local groups were also planting their trees on the Saturday morning with other groups having planted their

trees during the week. So armed with our trees, bottles of water and shovels we headed to our designated section and with instructions in the hands of Louise we started to dig. We had a number of different types of trees to plant including Copper and Green Beech, Silver Birch, Grey Alder and Hawthorn. The larger trees were planted at the back and small towards the front of the section.

We all pray that these trees will grow well and strong and always be a lasting part of Crommelin Wood for years to come. So, if you're looking for an afternoon walk why not go and visit the tree nursery and our section and enjoy the quietness of the woods away from the busyness of the town centre.

Andrew McKee

Church finance

Some good news and some bad.

The good news is that giving has increased a bit in recent months, helped by the influx of some new members from Ballyholme. But it has not just been the new members: regular giving in weekly envelopes is quite a bit higher than I expected at the start of the year. And on the spending side of the account, our gas and electricity bills have been lower than we budgeted for, thanks to Government assistance with the costs and a slight fall in the price of energy. So, for the

moment we are heading for a deficit of only £5000 for the year – I say ‘only’ because at one time we thought it would be a lot worse.

The bad news is that it is about to get a whole lot worse, with a complete catalogue of work to be done on the building. I won’t list it all, but there are repairs to be done in many areas, including the roof, which was damaged by children climbing on it and sliding down it (believe it or not!). We shall have to see how much of that bill will be met out of insurance.

Meantime, we are taking measures to protect the building from further damage, but that will itself involve expense.

Fortunately, we have some reserves which we can call on to meet the cost of repairs. The problem is not so much the money – I know the congregation will rally round and help out when the need arises – but the sheer amount of work the church officers concerned are having to put into managing the work. Maurice Wray and James Kennedy are doing a fantastic job on your behalf.

Still, that is the price we pay for having a lovely old church. We don’t do it for the sake of preserving an old building but for the sake of what it means to us all. Our faith isn’t just a set of doctrines, it’s the life and worship that flourishes in the shelter of our buildings.

Kit Chivers
Church Treasurer

The greatest book ever written

There is an old saying in life, “Never get into a debate with a person who is a reader of books”, because on most occasions you will come off second best. I believe reading a book is like travelling to parts of the world. It not only educates your mind but broadens your outlook on life.

The last book I read was given to me by my next-door neighbour. It was entitled ‘Reflections of the Road’ by the Rev Jim Rea. The book is about a collection of true stories that share the truth of the Gospel and honour the memory of some remarkable people. An amazing book and a very easy read.

‘Reflections of the Road’ will encourage and empower your Christian life. But the greatest book of all is the Holy Bible. As of 2015, the Guinness Book of World Records estimated that the Bible is the best-selling religious book of all time and the best-selling book overall. Seven billion copies of the Bible have been sold. It is a must for every Christian to own, for it is a roadmap to help and guide you through the Christian life.

As I finish writing this article, I would like to leave you with a very well-known verse from the New Testament that sums up the Gospel in a nutshell: John 3, v.16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life”.

My prayer is, for someone who does not know the Lord Jesus, that they would accept him into their lives and at the end of it have eternal life.

George Bolton

Waiting on God

*I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me
and heard my cry. Psalm 40:1 (ESV)*

Recently, one morning, I telephoned my doctor's surgery to make an appointment. As usual the line was engaged, and every 30 seconds I pressed the recall button hoping to be connected. After 35 minutes of trying I got through to a lady at reception! Does this scenario sound familiar? Friends tell me they have had the same problem when calling their doctor... only to be told they will have to wait several days or weeks to see them.

Thankfully, when it comes to connecting with God, there is no such delay. He is 'online' 24/7, 365 days a year, with never an 'engaged tone'. He is delighted to hear from us and is in no hurry to 'terminate our call'. What a blessing it is that the God who flung stars and galaxies into space is pleased to hear the praises and petitions we offer him.

Although God is never distant from us, he does sometimes let us wait for answers to prayers. I knew a Christian lady who prayed 25 years for her alcoholic son; not only has he controlled his addiction, he is now also active in his local church. His mother lived to see her son's life transformed, her persistent prayers answered.

King David of ancient Israel was a man of prayer, who had to learn to wait at times on God for answers. I can imagine his frustration when he prayed, 'How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? ...' (Psalm 13:1). Samuel the prophet anointed David, when a young man, to be the next king of Israel (1 Samuel 16); but it was many years until his father-in-law, King Saul, died and David took the throne.

Do we sometimes wonder why God takes so long to answer our prayers? Whatever our problems or desires, we can rest assured that God knows about them well before we ask.

We may never fully understand the reasons why God answers our prayers the way he does. Paul experienced a 'thorn in the flesh' during his ministry and wanted rid of it, but God told him that His grace would be sufficient for him (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Paul eventually got the message and replied, '...Therefore I will boast all the

more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.’ (v.9).

There are times in life when solutions to our problems seem impossible. It is at times like this that our first recourse should be, as David wrote, ‘Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!’ (Psalm 27:14).

Prayer

Father in heaven, as humans we are not hard-wired to wait and be patient. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit; help us to draw on him when we need help. Thank you for your faithfulness, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

Study by John Magowan

Take time

Take time to think -

it is the source of power.

Take time to read -

it is the foundation of wisdom.

Take time to play -

it is the secret of staying young.

Take time to be quiet -

it is the opportunity to seek God.

Take time to be aware -
it is the opportunity to help others.
Take time to love and be loved -
It is God's greatest gift.

Take time to laugh -
it is the music of the soul.
Take time to be friendly -
it is the road to happiness.

Take time to dream -
it is what the future is made of.
Take time to pray -
it is the greatest power on earth.

“There is a time for everything” Eccl. 3, v.1

Walking

Over summer, we have managed a few evening walks, slightly further afield than Donaghadee, despite the often inclement weather! Ballywalter beach, Groomsport, Ballyholme and Mount Stewart provided different views and also coffee experiences!! Can't believe we will soon be starting our winter regime of walking on Thursday afternoons at 1pm (from Thursday 5th October, meeting at Crommelin Park).

You would be very welcome to join us. Don't worry about your pace of walking as we split into groups if needed. We walk for approximately 1 hour and usually coffee after. If you'd like to find out more, please feel free to contact Helen 07751 795044.

MWI

It will be so good to have **our first autumn meeting on Monday 2nd October at 1.30pm in the Wesley Hall**, when we look forward to seeing you and also hopefully welcome some new members from the Bangor connection. With this in mind, we plan for our first meeting to be of an informal nature.

We usually meet on the **first Monday of the month** and below is listed our programme to the end of the year!

October 2 nd	Getting to know you.
November 6 th	Salvation Army Bangor: Speaker Major Linda Cunliffe
December 4 th	Advent meeting

We will have opportunity to discuss further when we have our 'Getting to know you' afternoon on the first Monday in October. I do hope you will consider attending any of the meetings that would suit you. You will be very welcome.

Helen Johnston and Mary Todd

Reflections

When we look around at the world to-day we feel overwhelmed by the tragedies that we see. There have been wild fires, floods, an earthquake and the bursting of the dams in Libya, all of which cost thousands of premature deaths. If we were being fanciful, we could imagine that the Earth was wreaking revenge for its abuse and misuse at the hand of man. This is on top of the continuing war in Ukraine, the repression of women by the Taliban, people trafficking, child abuse, hunger, homelessness and the continuing problem of refugees and immigrants. And to crown all that, there is the continuing danger of global warming and the refusal of governments to do anything about it except talk.

What is our attitude to be ?

Life can change in seconds, as I can testify, so, how do we cope? We have to trust and believe God's word, the Bible. both Old and New Testaments are full of God's nearness and His concern for us.

"I will never leave you nor forsake you". To quote Moses "They are not just idle words for you: they are your life". And Jesus said, " Do not let your hearts be troubled.Trust in God, trust also in me". "Lo I am with you always".

We often can't understand why things happen the way they do and we query what God is doing .We shouldn't. I think of the examples in the Old Testament – Shadrach,,Meshach and Abednego: "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace the

God we serve is able to save us from your hand,.....but even if he does not we will not worship your gods”. And Habakkuk: “Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God my Saviour”. “Acknowledge and take heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. .There is no other.”

So when we look at the world around us remember, “Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid”

Maeve

Connect Christian Counselling

In May of this year, Connect Christian Counselling Service celebrated 20 years of service to the community. This was marked by a service of thanksgiving in the Donaghadee Methodist church.

Since opening in 2003, over 950 requests have been made for our professional services. We have a dedicated team of volunteers who are supported by a management board drawn from the local churches.

There are presently 8 counsellors and 4 administrators, seeing clients weekly on Tuesday evening, Thursday evening and Friday morning. Each counsellor has between 2 and 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 have now lowered the threshold for our services to see clients from 16 years old, and we have seen several of these clients already this year.

We are now also providing supervision to counsellors from other agencies.

We accept donations but we do not charge for our services.

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.

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

George Thompson,
Director of Counselling



Tree planting in Crommelin Wood (page 16)





Easter Cross