

Ards Presbytery Consultation Committee
Report: Greenwell Street Presbyterian Church
Date: Tuesday 15th November,2022.

Process: The Consultation was carried out in the Greenwell Street Sanctuary and main foyer reception with integrated coffee bar area and upstairs spacious meeting room.

In Attendance: Revs. Mairisine Stanfield (Presbytery Moderator), Colin Megaw (Consultations Convener), David Stanfield (Presbytery Finance Convener), Jeff Mcwatters (Secretary), Craig Jackson (Ballygilbert) Mr Brian Knox (Chair of Presbytery Architectural Committee), Ms. Valerie Steel (Hamilton Road) Janet Johnson (Strean)

Apologies: Revs John Flaherty (Presbytery Clerk), Aaron Ditty (Youth Focus), Mrs Jean Mann (Helen's Bay).

Greenwell Street representatives include: Rev. Norman W. McAuley B.Sc., B.D., (Minister, Greenwell Street), Mr. David Francis (Clerk of Session), Mr Alan Russell (Property Convener), Mr. Ian Clegg (Hon. Treasurer) and a strong representation of the Kirk Session and Congregational Committee Members.

Kirk Session and Congregational Committee are sincerely thanked for their thorough written responses which were received well in advance of the Consultation Evening. From these and as affirmed by answers on the night, all Health and Safety Policies, and associated Certificates are up to date and Buildings Insurances Cover is current and sufficient. The Title Deeds are safely held in fire proof cabinets under the care of David Russell & Co. Solicitors. Other Documents are safely stored.

The Service of Worship: With a heartening attendance by the congregation's membership, the service commenced at 7.15pm. Under the much appreciated ministry of Norman McAuley, who was installed to this Charge in 2004, the congregation and Consultation Committee members

were warmly welcomed. The Minister proceeded to introduce the Invocation, opening praise of Psalm 100 and lead us in prayer before reading from the Scriptures at Psalm 36. The Reverend Craig Jackson then preached a heartening encouragement on giving prayerful focus to God's faithful love and timely provisions in the past and to look ahead to future missional opportunities with ongoing prayerfulness, faith and hope.

The Presentation was led by Mr David Francis (Session Clerk) and Mr. Alan Russell (Property Convener). Both men shared important details pertaining to the life and witness in and through Greenwell Street Church, which historically was a direct product of the 1859 Revival, followed by a decade of "Town Missions work, leading to the first minister being appointed in 1869." With an ongoing current membership of 656 families, embracing 324 Communicants and 322 contributing families, Greenwell Street, once the largest congregation in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, continues to be among the larger fellowships. More importantly is the attested committed leadership and faithful membership which continues to be passionately Bible based, prayer focussed and missionally outward looking.

As a congregation hosting 15 core organisations "Offering a range of Bible-based programmes to all ages", the Commission notes the potential for church members to befriend and influence for the Kingdom of God, high percentages of youth who attend afternoon Sunday School (86%), Boys Brigade (80%), GB (20%) and Youth Club (90%), but currently do not belong to Greenwell Street. In the Adult sector the same potential prevails such as Fit4Life (50%), Bowling Club (50%), Mainly For Men and Women's Meeting (20%) respectively. As such we commend Session's stated current focus seeking to further harness this potential along with offsetting "the drift of young people not engaging with today's church." This aim also includes plans for more energetic outreach to the East End of the town.

Seasonal specials within the church programme include Alpha Course, Christianity and Discipleship Explored, the Children's Christmas outreach, Fit For Life outreach to women in May/June, The Family Fun Day in May, Children's Summer Bible Clubs in July and ongoing plans to further enhance friendship and outreach among Muslim neighbours. It is also noted that the current Deaconess, Miss Rosemary Spiers, participates in

many of the congregation's organisations and has spearheaded summer ministry to mums & toddlers, and ongoing women's Bible study and Grief Share courses.

All of the above signals the committed leadership investment of many volunteers from the fellowship and underlines the constant need to train and refresh multi teams quotas. In this regard it is also noted that Child and Vulnerable Adult training has been attended with associated policies kept under review, as to ongoing PCI guidance updates.

Concerning the Buildings highlighted during Alan Russell's contribution, it is noteworthy that the current church building was constructed in 1970, replacing the original 100 year old building and that the Johnston Hall was added in 1981 to the existing McIlwrath Hall that was built in 1960. The Session and Committee then progressed to a £1.2 million project which was completed in December of 2012 and which facilitates a two storey construct linking the church and halls together. As a result the attractive main entrance to Greenwell Street Presbyterian now faces the street which Consultation Committee agrees "Gives the church a more open and welcoming aspect." The obvious enhancements, including a spacious reception/coffee bar, ground floor office and toilets and lift or stairs to the First Floor, providing a multi-use worship room plus four other rooms facilitates more fellowship opportunities. At the same time significant alterations were made to the main hall and upgrading to some rooms, Including a dedicated Youth Room and upgraded creche. A library facility is now available.

With all the above very much noted and celebrated, the Moderator expressed thanks and closed this stage of the evening with grace for the pending hospitality and opportunity to meet the members of the congregation in attendance.

Following the breaktime, for which the Rev. Jeff McWatters expressed a vote of thanks, the Consultation Committee met with the *Congregational Committee* in the presence of the Kirk Session and Minister in the first floor worship room. The current Assistant Minister Mr. Thomas Moore also attended and follows in the tradition of many diligent and much valued Assistant Ministers. Note was taken of the immediate past Assistant Minister's October 2022 prayer update from Ramelton and Leiter,

Donegal which signals that Richard and the Tregaskis family continue to appreciate the prayer support and loving encouragement of the Greenwell Street congregation.

Following a brief explanation regarding the Presbytery partnership model of Consultations by the Convener, Rev Colin Megaw proceeded to the questions phase. First up, The Presbytery Architect was invited to bring his findings regarding a recent inspection of all buildings including the Manse. Mr Brian Knox reported that he was receiving enthusiastic cooperation regarding areas of the campus in need of repair and also identified the need for vegetation pathway clearance to the rear of the site. Committee had already identified the need for updating to lighting in the Sanctuary and longer term cost effectiveness associated with upgraded lighting and loft insulation in the sanctuary is recognised.

Tribute was paid to the upgrading works to the McIlwrath Hall and Johnston Hall, however the latter reflects that attention is needed to guttering and flashing to “resolve water staining on the McIlwrath front wall rendering.” Concerning the well maintained Manse some areas of loft insulation have been recently replaced and recent electrical works have been carried out. Settlement cracks to outer walls are considered minor and could be filled during a future decoration. Consideration to the installation of solar panels is noted. The 2012 project is highly commended by Consultation Committee.

Concerning Finance the Rev David Stanfield noted the healthy financial accounts and congratulated the treasurer, Mr Ian Clegg and his team for their work. He also commended the congregation for their overall level of giving, particularly during the challenging circumstances of the disruption of Covid and the current increase in the cost of living. In particular he highlighted their generosity for the work of the mission of the Church of Christ, both in Ireland and overseas.

Several questions which required clarification regarding how the accounts were presented were asked by Mr Stanfield and were answered most satisfactorily. David Stanfield confirms that the accounts have been properly audited and are in order.

The Committee were asked to consider the amount contributed to United Appeal in the specific section of their Statistical Return to more accurately reflect their support for mission within the Presbyterian Church In Ireland as it currently rests within the wider context of giving to mission in general.

Following thanks and prayer by the Moderator, the Committee were released along with the Assistant Minister and the Kirk Session remained with the first ten minutes without the required presence of Rev. McAuley. During this time the Kirk Session expressed their very sincere and unreserved appreciation of their minister. Norman is attested as a most pastorally hearted minister who has a dedicated and very well prepared preaching and teaching ministry. He is also endorsed as one who leads meetings with great efficiency and time management. His care for staff is endorsed and the Session is pleased that he takes time off duty and has proper holidays as one who gives so much of himself to the congregation under his charge alongside Presbytery responsibilities and a keen role with Middle Eastern Reformed Fellowship.

On his return to the Kirk Session meeting, appreciation of his elders and congregation was very much reciprocated by Norman who is enjoying a fulfilling ministry at Greenwell Street.

The Eldership response to questions reflected consistency with their written responses. They are praying keenly and working practically towards the regathering of the church family. Printed materials from the fellowship are delivered widely and pastoral visitation is shared by the elders which releases Norman and his Assistant Minister and Deaconess to attend to special pastoral situations.

Consultation endorses this Pastoral Model which reflects a good realism that a congregation is at its best where across the board Body Ministry is exercised. The Kirk Session is aware of challenges facing them in an increasingly secularised world and again it is reiterated that they are approaching the recovery of Youth as well as adults in an intentional prayer-based and strategic manner. To that end Presbytery partners in

prayer with Greenwell Street and also shares concern regarding greater impact into the East End of Newtownards.

Regarding the Sunday Schools Am/Pm and Bible Class there are heartening attendance figures yet these are expected to increase as regathering increases and new families are reached. The same theme is pertinent to “Mainly for Men”, “PW”,

“Mums and Tots” and “Little Lights” and it is also noted that the Uniformed organisations are well attended.

Session and minister are expressly aware that more leaders/helpers are needed year on year, to cover such an adventurous and committed programme of activities and the Consultation Committee join Session in thanking all the volunteers who help week on week throughout the year.

In all matters it is clear everyone is geared to the fulfilment of the stated Mission Statement “To promote the worship of God and build a congregation of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

As stated in the written responses, Greenwell Street is a very mission minded fellowship which gives generous support to mission within and beyond PCI.

Discipleship of people of all ages is mainly approached through the centrality of the preaching of God’s Word, in church services and small groups during the week, the midweek meeting, communicant classes YF Bible Study and the organisations and courses hosted to harness the principles and practices of discipleship. Members are encouraged to identify their gifts. In this regard Consultation Committee recognise the musical talent and praise leadership expressed on Sundays, during special seasons and throughout the week. We also recognise the good work achieved through hospitality which includes after church coffee, newcomers’ lunches, funeral teas and on other occasions.

It is also noted that all due diligence pertaining to sacramental standards are encouraged and maintained as minister and eldership work closely together in these matters. The context for loving discipline is achieved.

Very sadly word was filtering through the Presbytery Clerk to our Presbytery to the Moderator concerning the unexpected passing earlier in the evening of our colleague and friend Rev. Dr. Paul Bailie and as an active and much valued member of Greenwell Street we shared their shock and pain. The Moderator offered prayers for Anne and for Paul's many close friends in many walks of life. We also recognised that Norman had carried this information throughout the evening of the Consultation and our prayers were also very much for his caring pastoral personality and ministry.

After the elders left the meeting time, was spent with Rosemary Spiers who has served for the past five years as Deaconess to this congregation. She expressed a keen missional and pastoral approach expressed not least through a Bible Study to women and keen interest in young families as well as the bereft through her hosting of Griefshare. The Moderator prayed for Rosemary's ongoing ministry in team with Norman, Thomas and the eldership.

At this point Norman had a private session with the Consultation Committee during which he expressed thanks for his wife Joy who has given immense support to Norman throughout his ministry.

Comments

1. That the Consultation Committee notes the prayerfulness of the Elders and congregation which undergirds all that Greenwell Street seeks to be and do.
 2. We note and celebrate the variety of organisations and outreach initiatives within the Church weekly and seasonal programmes.
 3. Consultation Committee congratulates the Congregational Committee for all the building and reconfiguration works as evidenced in their responses and documented survey carried out by Mr. Brian Knox. We are confident that minor issues as highlighted will be attended to in good time.
 4. We join with Rev. David Stanfield in recognising the dedicated generosity of the congregation financially and regarding efficient record keeping and partnership with Presbytery.
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5. Consultation Committee endorses the preaching and pastoral leadership given by the Rev. Norman McAuley and recognise the contribution over the years given by a series of assistant ministers and current deaconess.

6. We thank Mrs. Joy McAuley for her initiatives towards ministers' wives within the Presbytery and her faithful support of and encouragement to Norman.

Signed by: *John McLaughlin* Presbytery Moderator

Signed by: *John H. Kelly* Presbytery Clerk

Signed by: *A.W. Hayes* Consultations Convener

Date: *7-2-2023*