

Ballyhenry Presbyterian Church Congregational Committee Report 2020.

2020 was a year like no other for Ballyhenry and we are so thankful to God for His guidance and protection throughout it. The first few months of the year we dealt mainly with the flood damage caused to our premises in November of 2019. Then in March came the Covid 19 Pandemic and at our March meeting Rev. Lockhart explained that Session had made a governance arrangement to allow for necessary action to be taken in light of the unfolding Coronavirus situation. Two members of Session (alongside our minister) were appointed, to ensure the continued necessary discharge of responsibilities ordinarily within the remit of the Congregational Committee. Smaller meetings including relevant office bearers were able to take place via Zoom. In all we held seven meetings during 2020, either the full Committee on our Church premises or the smaller group via Zoom. We dealt with finance, property, mission, community engagement matters, worship support etc. Short reports from three of these groups are as follows:

Finance:

The congregation's main source of income is members' contributions through the Weekly Freewill Offering. There were 172 contributing households during the year [number in previous year, 2019: 186] donating a total of £219.6k. In 2019 direct giving was £176.2k. The increase can be attributed to the uplift in giving to the Property Fund to enable the update of the heating system.

The total income for 2020 is £264k compared to £207k in 2019. This increase of £57k can be attributed to the following:

£43.4k increase in direct giving.

£2.8k decrease in donations and legacies.

£2.4k decrease in activities that generate income to be expected during lockdown.

£18.3k increase in other income sources. We received Urban Mission Covid-19 grant, employees furlough grant, Council Grant to refurbish Cliftonville Hall, money from our insurance claim (most bills were paid directly by insurance co to suppliers) and North Belfast Presbytery Urban Mission grant of £19.5k for the coffee dock area. Only £9.5k of this was spent so we are holding back £10k for 2021. This appears as deferred income in the Balance sheet under Creditors.

Total expenditure decreased from £217k (2019) to £187k (2020).

This decrease was accounted for mostly by the following:

“Ministry & Support Staff” – decreased by £4k due to 1 less member of staff for most of the year.

“Life & Work” – decreased by £22k. Due to closure of the church.

“Grants to Missions & Charities” – decreased by £22k from £58k in 2019 to £36k in 2020. In 2019 £20k was expended on the Cambodia project However “Governance” – increased by £2k with increased postage, COVID-19 compliance, and the employment of an insurance consultant to oversee our water damage claim.

“Property & Equipment” – increased by £16k due to insurance work (covered by claim) and Asbestos Removal and the refurbishment of the Cliftonville hall (covered by grant).

Balance Sheet -The cash held increased from £93k (31.12.2019) to £143k (31.12.2020). £5.7k is being held for the Cambodia team and other charities. It should be noted that £31k of the cash is held by the organisations so is not available for use within the main church accounts.

“Creditors - Amounts falling due after one year”- £45k is still owed to Crescent Loan Fund. The original 5-year loan was £50k to pay for the heating upgrade.

“Creditors: amounts falling due within one year”- £31.5k a major part of this is £16k still owed to the heating contractor and £10k being held as deferred income for coffee dock.

“Fixed Assets” – Up on 2019 by £88k. The cost of heating upgrade is an asset and will be charged as depreciation over the next 10 years to the church expenditure under Property and Equipment.

Community Engagement Matters:

Noeleen Magee advises that our involvement with the community this year has really centred around the food bank and baby bank. Requests for food vouchers has risen by approx. 60% mainly due to furloughed workers and those made redundant. She has also been involved in signposting people to other sources of help within our community.

This can be for further practical aid or benefit advice. Noeleen has also had several requests for assistance with baby products and would use the baby bank in Glengormley Methodist Church where she can assist with the provision of clothing, nappies, prams, cots etc. for families in need.

She was also involved with the Covid 19 grocery boxes and helped distribute these to families who were deemed to be in need by either Social Services or one of the local community groups. She distributed 36 Christmas hampers this year and although further requests came in, due to her ill health, these were passed on to another community group who dealt with them.

Noeleen has established links with our local community hub and will be involved in another food programme that will be coming into place in mid-February 2021. This will remove the need to attend the food bank for those who struggle to ask for help. She intends taking a course this year to assist with people wanting to access benefits, she does have some experience but feels she needs a more rounded approach to the whole area of social security. She obviously cannot do anything until lockdown is over but has been in contact with The Citizens Advice to request some training.

We are delighted to say Noeleen has recently been appointed as a director of Cloughfern / Ballyclare Credit Union. She is a great advocate of the Credit Union as it assists those on lower incomes to save and access low-cost finance when required.

We are also delighted to say that following Session's recommendation to The Education Authority Noeleen has been appointed to the Board of Governors in Ballyhenry Primary School where she will serve alongside Roy Winter. John Beattie continues to serve as a Governor in Mossgrove Primary and Hugh Smyth serves on the Board of Glengormley High.

Although much of Noeleen's time is taken up by local issues she is still very much in touch with Mphatso in Malawi and, as always, the congregation's support in all her efforts is greatly appreciated.

Property:

The new year brought with it the task of repairing the extensive damage caused by the previous year's flooding. It was apparent that it would take a long time to carry out the repairs. As the Church would be vacated the committee decided to replace all of the heating system and consultants were appointed to design and supervise the contract. Given the anticipated extent of the insurance claim an insurance specialist was also appointed to act on behalf of the Church. Committee were grateful for the expertise and guidance that Elaine Graham brought to this process. A number of improvements to the property were also approved.

Over the next months many repairs and improvements were carried out. All the carpet was removed and over a period of weeks the floor dried out using the services of a specialist firm. A portacabin was installed to compensate, in part for the loss of accommodation. Asbestos sheeting identified in the former boiler room was dealt with by an approved contractor. The major contract was for the replacement of all the heating pipework, together with the provision of high-quality radiators and upgraded controls. The raised area at the rear of the Church was levelled and a concrete floor constructed. The lobby in the welcome area was removed to be replaced by new entrance doors and side screens. Various rooms, including the welcome area, were redecorated and the Cliftonville Hall floor was refreshed. New folding chairs with trolleys for stacking were purchased to replace the original plastic chairs. Electrical work was carried out to modify some of the circuits and all of the light fittings in the main Church were relamped with higher output bulbs. The audio-visual system was reviewed by a specialist firm, redesigned in part and upgraded. New cameras and screens are the most visible signs of this work.

All the contracts were completed by the end of the summer, overcoming the necessary restrictions to comply with various Covid 19 regulations.

Throughout this period, there was a vital input from Church members. An impressive range of expertise was made available, this included insurance, health and safety, audio visual, mechanical, electrical and building.

A sincere thanks is given to the many who readily gave of their time and skills.

2020 has been an extremely difficult year in the life of Ballyhenry. We are so grateful to all the folk who helped out when services were allowed to take place on our church premises, either in The Cliftonville Hall, or the main sanctuary when renovations were completed. Coronavirus restrictions were strictly adhered to. Sanitising hands upon entering and leaving the premises, strict social distancing etc. We are so grateful to all who helped with these arrangements. Doing church in 'lockdown' brought many challenges, through this

time we benefitted greatly from Kyle Hutton's insights into using Zoom, alongside the digital creativity of John Acheson and those who worked alongside him and Laura Patterson in recording and mixing our weekly praise.

Our Church Cleaner, Mrs. Yvonne Jefferson, has been on furlough some of the year. When not on furlough she again did an excellent job in looking after our premises especially whilst all the renovation work was being carried out.

Rev. Lockhart has also had a year like no other and we are so grateful not only for his devotion to the congregation, but also for his devotion and guidance to Committee during this difficult period. We wish him, Zarina, Sam and Maggie God's richest blessing in 2021.

We, your Congregational Committee, are so thankful to you all for your help and support during 2020. Our premises now are better than ever thanks to all the renovations which took place during this difficult and trying year, and so we look forward to when we will all meet together once again sitting side by side praising our wonderful God and we will give Him all the glory.

Amy Davren
Congregational Secretary