

CHURCHNEWS

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PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

125
YEARS
2025

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Cover image: Cregagh Celebrates 125 years of Christian Witness and fellowship on this site.

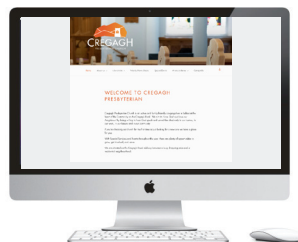
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Visit: cregaghpresbyterian.org

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The Awe of Christmastide

Dear Friends,

The first frosts of December had transformed the streets of London into a silver wonderland. Gas lamps glimmered faintly through the crisp morning mist as young Mary pressed her nose to the parlour window, watching the world outside come alive beneath a blanket of white. It was Christmas Day and her heart fluttered with anticipation.

Downstairs, her mother carefully tied a ribbon in Mary's bonnet. "Hurry now, we mustn't be late," she said, voice gentle but insistent. In the hallway, her father adjusted his stiff cravat, glancing at the grandfather clock. The church bells echoed across the rooftops, steady and solemn, calling the faithful to worship.

Wrapped warmly in woollen cloaks, the family stepped out into the bustling street. Carriages rattled past, their horses' hooves muffled by snow, while neighbours exchanged shouts of "Happy Christmas!" along their way. There was an especial cheer in the air, as if the very city breathed hope and goodwill on this sacred morning.

At the church gates, Mary marvelled at the capes, gentlemen in top hats, and eager children. Inside, the church glowed with candlelight from the great Christmas tree mingling with the hymns now danced with garlands of holly.

The organist struck the opening chords of the hymn and the congregation rose as one. Mary clutched her hands together with all her might. The vicar, in white robes, began his sermon on the miracle of Christ's birth. His words, echoing through the nave, even the coldest heart glow with warmth.

After the service, families gathered in the church hall, settling on bonnets and hats. Old Mrs Higgins handed out oranges to the parish children, while Mary's father exchanged festive wishes with the neighbours. Laughter and song filled the air, and for a moment, the hardships of the year fell away, replaced by the promise of joy.



As the family made their way home, Mary looked back at the church, its bell ringing out across the city. For her, and for so many others, this Christmas Day would be remembered not for presents or feasts, but for the warmth of voices joined in song, and the peace found among friends in the glow of candlelight and faith.

We are a world away from the Victorian days that Mary knew, yet her wonder ought to inspire us. We have become so familiar and accustomed to Christmas or have placed the beauty of Jesus at the side, to fit around all the other stuff, that we have lost her childlike awe.

This Christmastide, in our 125th year, you are invited to our services. It would be a pleasure to share with you again the story and the splendour of Jesus who came as a baby, that faithful night, to save us from our sins and fill us with the love, hope, joy and peace of an everlasting holy kingdom.

So come to Cregagh for a warm welcome, a joyous singing, a hopeful message and a calling to faith and fellowship that would relight that fire of worship and service within you. For when we see Christ the child with open eyes and hearts, that childlike awe, that transforming faith can only fill us and shape our lives anew:

Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth!
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth!

Have a peaceful and blessed Christmas,
Your Friend and Minister,

Edward

Financial Notes from 'The Treasury'

In this article Richard Molyneaux, Finance Committee member and Joint Property Fund Convenor, provides an overview of congregational financial matters in this our 125th anniversary year, and welcomes our new Property Fund Convenor Gillian Simons who takes up post in January 2026.

In this our 125th anniversary year our thoughts have turned to the long and distinguished history of this congregation, and as we look forward to the visit of the Moderator of the General Assembly the Rt. Reverend Dr Trevor Gribben on Sunday 7 December (the date Cregagh was officially established as a congregation in 1900) we remember, with grateful thanks, all those who have been custodians of all matters financial from the inception of the 'Iron Church' to the restored and refurbished church building that we occupy today. It is worth recording that when the first Annual General Meeting was held on 22 April 1903 the Treasurer, Francis McBride, reported that income during the year had

amounted to £214 3s 1d, and the Iron Church building, heating, gas fittings, seating and general cost of the furnishings had cost about £800. A far cry you might say from the recent restoration and refurbishment project which required an investment of £1.8m overseen by our highly esteemed Treasurer, Gordon Dunlop.

Whilst anniversaries allow us to reminisce about the past they also provide an opportunity to look forward to the future with renewed vigor and optimism as we seek to grow in faith as a church family. Financially we are so very fortunate to be in a good position with substantial reserves in place. As I write, the Weekly Freewill Offering (WFO) is showing a slight increase on the same period last year and this is welcomed given the number of families contributing to WFO in the last 10 years has dropped from 258 to 151 (as at December 2024), and though we are most grateful to everyone who kindly contributes to church funds we recognise that this is a trend familiar to most churches. However, it should be remembered that the economy has been through a series of crises and fluctuations since the global crash in 2008 culminating in the present cost of living crisis which has affected us all. The Chancellor

of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, is scheduled to deliver the budget on 26 November and we await the outcome with interest.

I am pleased to report that the General Fund's performance has shown a marked improvement this year, in no small part due to increasing support from the Property Fund which is covering more of our property related operating expenditure now that we no longer have a loan to repay. And across all other areas of church finance we are doing well; Property Fund, Missions & Charitable giving including the United Appeal, and the Malawi fund. You have been most generous in supporting all facets of church work and from a property perspective this is enabling us to protect, maintain, and enhance our suite of church buildings including the Manse. As I write the Harvest Gift Day has, thus far, raised £3,502 reflecting an 11% increase year-on-year and this will once again benefit the Property Fund. The Missions Support Group (MSG) has continued to distribute support to our mission interests in India and Nigeria, together with our continuing support for charitable good causes like the Tear Fund, Leprosy Mission and the Orphans society. The United Appeal is well supported every year and we anticipate that by 31 December

we will meet the PCI 'target of honour' of £8,876. Our work in Malawi continues to be overseen by a dedicated team which provides financial support for projects following the visit by the Malawi 2023 Team. The Christmas Offering once again this year will be for missions and outreach and your continuing generosity will be very much appreciated. As a congregation we are fortunate to have a dedicated and professional Finance team administering and managing all matters financial and we thank everyone who gives leadership in this area.

The message from the Finance Committee remains constant, thank you for all your contributions and please continue to support the work of the Lord as best you can. Your giving of course can also attract Gift Aid and if you are a UK tax payer but not currently gift aiding your contributions please speak to Elaine Gillespie, our Gift Aid Convenor. It enables us to claim an additional 25% from 'HM Revenue & Customs' (HMRC) which is a most welcome source of additional income and an essential component of our financial model.

In terms of fund-raising our grateful thanks are extended to the Christian Aid Team who once again organised

this year's Coffee morning in May. It was a huge success and a further example of our support for international mission. Our Flower Festival in June was also a massive success running from Thursday 29 May – Sunday 1 June, with huge crowds attending over the 4 day event. Grateful thanks to Maureen Mulligan and her team for organising the event, and to everyone who helped with the provision of exhibits, stewarding and provision of meals and snacks in the Allen Hall. The event raised just over £6,000 for Church funds, which is magnificent, so thank you one and all. Our grateful thanks are also extended to the Catering Committee for giving all proceeds from the provision of refreshments following Services of Thanksgiving to the Property Fund. It is a service that brings great comfort to bereaved families and at the time of writing it has raised £2,610 this calendar year.

Online banking for many has become the preferred method of contributing to the church replacing the need to handle cash, write cheques and give by envelope. If you would like to manage your giving in this way the Ulster Bank, Connswater, details are as follows:

There are four key accounts and the sort code is **98-01-60**:

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| WFO | 13360028 |
| Property Fund | 13360101 |
| Gift Aid Distribution | 10825585 |
| (this is the account for mission & charitable giving) | |
| Malawi | 13549067 |

Please identify your contributions online by your initials, surname and WFO number as reference. If you would like to regularise your giving by monthly standing order, and Gift Aid your contributions, please speak to Elaine Gillespie.

Finally, after 21 years service as Joint Property Fund Convenors, Elaine and I have decided to step down and retire. It has been our privilege to serve the congregation in this capacity which included involvement in the Restoration & Refurbishment project. We would like to thank our members and 'friends of Cregagh' and everyone who has kindly supported the Fund during our tenure including Kirk Session, the Congregational Committee, all our organisations and fund-raisers.

We have worked with four treasurers during that time; the late Trevor Hanna, Alan Spence, Dixie McKenzie, and since 2012 Gordon Dunlop, and we have been grateful for their guidance and

support. Gordon has been a great source of encouragement advice and support and as a congregation we are fortunate to have someone of his calibre as Treasurer, meticulous in his attention to detail. Thanks are also extended to our Congregational Secretary Jim McCurry and his wife Karen, and the Building Maintenance Committee for the great work they do in maintaining and enhancing our suite of buildings including the Manse, and in this regard grateful thanks to Church Officer Don Jackson and Nigel Platt for the great work they do. Robert McNair has been a tremendous asset on all matters relating to information technology (IT), and his support has been invaluable. On the Gift Aid front we have worked with Heather Sharpe and Elaine Gillespie and we are so very grateful for the great work they have undertaken to claim from HMRC.

We are also so very fortunate to have a dedicated Finance Committee and hard working 'Count Teams' led by Kathryn Glover, Karen McCurry and Ruth Hill who count and lodge your contributions. A very important task.

The support of our Ministers during our tenure was also very much appreciated and to our Minister Emeritus Reverend Hastings McIntyre, Reverend Paul Dalzell

and Reverend Edward McKenzie we say thank you for your prayerful and practical support, as we do to Clerk of Session Emeritus Dennison Mahood, and Clerk of Session Michael Graham.

Elaine and I are delighted to report that Gillian Simons has agreed to take over as Convenor in January, and as a congregation we are fortunate to have Gillian on board given her extensive experience in the financial services sector. She will bring a wealth of experience to the Finance Committee and we know you will support her in the days ahead.

So in this our 125th anniversary year let us look forward to the future with confidence and optimism, growing in faith together, and as the Bible tells us...

'Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver'.

2 Corinthians 9 v 7.

Thank you for your continuing support for the work of the Lord here in Cregagh which is so very much appreciated and warmest good wishes to you and your family for the Christmas season and 2026.

LOCAL EVANGELISM IN ACTION!!

A couple of years ago Drew Haire began a personal project which aimed to raise awareness of Cregagh Presbyterian Church within our surrounding community. As a very local resident he became aware that we 'locals' pass the church almost on a daily basis and most never enter it. So he began distributing little faith based booklets two to three times a year on which he included a brief message confirming 'us' as the sender.

The target area includes the four streets directly in front of the church, the houses on the front of the road and the apartments next door, these homes being within earshot of the Sunday morning church bell. I've called this the 'Red Zone'.

After a recent conversation with Edward we have decided to extend the Red Zone from the Bells Bridge roundabout to Ardenlee Avenue increasing the number of houses to around 300.

We also thought it would be an opportunity to invite other folk in the church to join the Red Zone team. Edward often prays on Sunday mornings for the spread of the gospel 'around the world and around the corner'. This has always resonated with Drew and, perhaps, others would be willing to take our gospel message 'around the corner' and across the road.

THOMAS CLARKE - ACHIEVEMENT OF ACCREDITED PREACHER

After almost three years of work, assessments and placements, we extend our warmest congratulations to Thomas Clarke, who has completed and passed all elements of his Accredited Preacher's course. Following final ratification by the Council for Training and Ministry, Thomas will gather with those he has trained alongside for a special service of accreditation. We pray that the Lord would bless Thomas and his family as he serves as an Accredited Preacher.



Thomas with his wife Rebecca.

BLUE SAPPHIRE, DIAMOND AND BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS!

Warmest congratulations and best wishes were expressed to Tommy and Beth McCluskey who celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on 12 March 2025. Beth and Tommy were married in Cregagh by Rev Arthur Barbour and have given a lifetime of service to this congregation.

Best wishes and warmest congratulations to Jean and George Morrow who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Thursday 4th September. Jean and George were married here in Cregagh by the late Reverend Arthur Barbour



Tommy and Beth McCluskey

Diamond Anniversary congratulations also to Sadie and Maurice Turner who celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary on 20 March 2025. They joined Cregagh after they got married and are still part of our church family.

We also pass on our heartiest congratulations to Gladys Shields who celebrated her 100th birthday on 31st October 2025.



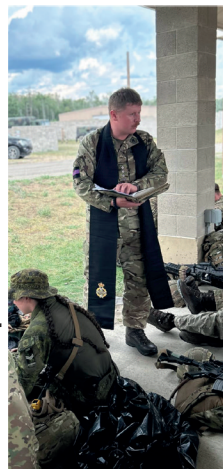
Gladys Shields with (from left), her daughter Janet and Rev Edward McKenzie.



Right: Some 'Happy Birthday' buns.

The Anchor of *Remembrance*

Rev McKenzie gave the congregation a fascinating update on his army chaplaincy at a Cafe Connect Service on Sunday 2 November as part of our season of remembrance. In this article, reprinted with kind permission from the Presbyterian Herald in November 2025, he describes what it's like to be a Reserve army chaplain.



In the British Army, the Reserve chaplain or ‘padre’ (as we are known) acts in a strange dual role, wearing the hat of both a civilian minister and a military officer, which offers a distinctive form of ministry. Unlike our full-time counterparts, Reserve padres embed themselves in the lives of soldiers at training nights, weekends and during annual training, building relationships that bridge the civilian and military worlds. This unique position affords us a profound privilege to understanding some of the soldiers’ experiences, from the mental burden of training to the moral weight of deployment. This shared experience, in turn, allows the padre to connect with Remembrance on a deeply personal level, acting as a vital link between a unit’s lived history and its solemn commemorations.

The distinctiveness of the Reserve padre’s work begins with their integration into the fabric of a unit’s routine. While Regular padres are present daily, Reserve chaplains invest focused, high-impact time alongside their soldiers. As they participate in the same field exercises, the Reserve padre strives to earn the trust and respect that are the foundation of all effective pastoral care. To become a confidant, a moral guide, and a source of stability, as well as showing soldiers God’s love and the wonder of what Jesus, and his work, means for their lives.

This dual-world perspective makes the Reserve padre a unique witness to the soldier’s experience. In their civilian life, Reservists occupy all sorts of roles and

employment and this gives them the challenge of juggling two very different lifestyles.

As a Reserve padre I can understand the stresses of transitioning between roles and the mental weight of a 'normal' life overlaid with the realities of military commitment, because I am trying to spin similar plates. This understanding allows me to address concerns that might never be raised with a Regular chaplain. I can speak from a place of empathetic insight, acknowledging the sacrifices that Reservists and their families make which, in turn I hope, reinforces the bond of trust.

My usual commitment is one training night a week, a portion of a weekend a month (I try not to miss Sundays at Cregagh) and like most Reservists, 16 days continuous training once a year. Sometimes I can do more, sometimes I have to settle for less, as I balance family and congregational commitments. I am continually grateful for the support and encouragement of both my family and the folk at Cregagh in trying to achieve this. Serving as a Reserve padre helps me, by forcing me out of the parish ministry setting and allowing me to develop and reflect upon the things of God in a totally different environment.

Recently, I was the only British chaplain deployed on an overseas exercise to Michigan in the USA. This was an international exercise where we trained alongside soldiers who were American, Latvian and from many other nations. I had the opportunity to minister to a wide range of people from all sorts of backgrounds. My time there was often intense – some of the training environments were made as realistic as they possibly could be which was sobering as well as emotionally and spiritually draining. Working with the Americans was interesting as it helped me to reflect upon different approaches to chaplaincy work. One of the chaplains (who are known as 'chaps' in the US) even had a therapy dog whom he had trained to salute! It was a blessing to share in these experiences alongside the folk from my unit.

This shared, lived experience is extremely poignant during the period of Remembrance. While Remembrance season itself is of supreme importance, in my unit Remembrance is not something kept for November but is part of the yearly training rhythm. Across the year, we meet in four separate locations on four different occasions to pause, remember and learn about the rich history of

those from our part of this island who fought and died. Therefore, leading an act of Remembrance is not an abstract duty but a deeply personal one.

The fallen are not just names on war memorials but echoes of the potential and commitment I see in the guys and girls that turn up to a training night or weekend when they have just finished a long shift in their civilian job. The time may come when they are called to go and fight and I can say with complete confidence that they will do what is required with dedication, professionalism and skill. So, Remembrance is a powerful, emotional anchor for the entire unit. The words we use and the prayers we say carry the weight of both faith and familiarity, giving voice to a collective sense of the past, present and future, that feels both sacred and immediate.

While formal parades and services are important, a large part of my role is simply being around. With pouches filled with Haribo (or 'Morale-ibo' as the troops often call it!) and little camouflage New Testaments, it's a blessing for me to chat and share with those who are going about their training duties, often sitting with them during their breaks or responding to the commonly uttered saying: "Do you have a minute padre?" While the work may not look like traditional evangelism, it is still very much mission. Typically, I am the only link with church these folk have, folk who often, while not always, are young men in their 20s and 30s; a group that is absent from many congregational settings.

In a world where the church is being pushed away and fighting for a place at the table, I find myself with an accepted settled role where I am part of the comings and goings of what happens. What a privilege and opportunity to get to speak of Jesus in these settings. This is enhanced further by getting to do this with full-time troops – as Reservists we often work alongside our Regular counterparts.

In the context of an increasingly secular world, the Reserve padre's role as a moral and ethical compass is more relevant than ever. We provide a non-judgmental space, outside of the chain of command, for service personnel to grapple with moral dilemmas and find personal resilience. While soldiers can be blunt, coarse and direct, they truly do represent the best of us; they are incredibly open and willing to talk about their lives and the things of God. The enduring human need for spiritual and pastoral support is so clearly expressed

LOVE GOD AND LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR

LIVING OUR FAITH

OPEN AND WELCOMING

GOOD WORSHIP

MEETING SOCIAL NEEDS



by those guys and girls as I sit beside them in a hole in the ground, over a cup of tea in a classroom or when they are all nice and shiny on a parade square. Faith and belief can thrive in those places – I have seen it, albeit a little rough around the edges sometimes.





Army Cadet Force

Cregagh's Army Cadet Force continues to thrive with 20 plus regular attendees. The Army Cadets aims to inspire young people between 12 and 18 years old to challenge their limits, grow their abilities and go further in life; we deliver this through the community-based Army Cadet Force and the school based Combined Cadet Force.



Alfie McKenzie at the Cregagh Cadets

The ACF develops young people of all abilities and backgrounds physically and mentally, improving self-confidence, teamwork, friendship, leadership and community spirit through a wide range of fun and exciting activities as well as recognised vocational qualifications such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and BTEC Diplomas. Although not part of the on recruiting process for the Armed Forces, the ACF does however promote an understanding of what the Armed Forces' roles and responsibilities are, and provide assistance to any cadet who expresses an interest in joining the Armed Forces later in life.



The Cregagh Cadets at their Recruitment Open Night on 5 November 2025

The Army Cadet Force meets in the Allen Hall on Monday evenings, 7-9pm (info@cregahcadets.com).

Voices of Cregagh



125
YEARS

On Wednesday 10th September as part of our 125 celebrations, a special evening was held to think about and recognise those who have served the congregation over the years, past and present, reflecting upon their experiences.

We all know the theological concept that the church is the people. One thing people do is talk, they love to talk, talking and sharing with each other. When people care for one another they talk. This space and congregation have been a place of conversation for over 100 years and has

also, more importantly been a place where many have lifted their praise to God in song. The voices of Cregagh have been shared in chat and in worship like building blocks that have forged the bricks of the Kingdom of God here on the Cregagh Road and we hope and pray that as we continue to add our voices to them that we, by God's grace, are laying more foundations for the next 125 years and beyond.



Members of Kirk Session at the Voices of Cregagh event.

This is not a night where we thank everyone that ought to be thanked for their work in this place. There would be too many and it would take too long, as so many faithful Christians here in Cregagh work together for the

Lord, but it is a moment to recognise some, who have contributed or continue to contribute in spiritual leadership. Now follows a number of presentations, not big showy things, but the giving of simple tokens to say thank you. After the presentations I'll do the dangerous thing of 'opening the floor' should anyone wish to say anything, to share a memory or thought, but there is no pressure and it is totally fine if no one does. Hopefully afterwards we can join together for a cup of tea in the Allen hall and the voices of Cregagh can be lifted in fellowship again.

We begin with those currently serving in the eldership,



(L-R) Derrick Cartlidge, Jacqueline Davey, Gordon and Barbara Dundlop, Alan Spence, Anne Sheppard, Rev McKenzie, Tommy McCluskey, Dennison Mahood, Robert and Yvonne Oliver.

They all serve in different ways, but I'm not listing CVs tonight, remembering that small everyday acts of service are often the most important. I wondered what comes to my mind when I think of each of them, what one or two things do I think of first. So, while by no means an exhaustive list of their contributions to church life, while acknowledging they do much more than what I mention, our current elders are,

Rebecca Clarke 2011
David Gillespie 2011
Michael Graham 1990
Beth McNair 1990
Robert McNair 2011
Maureen Mulligan 1990
Dorothy Platt 2011
Avril Pollock 2011

Guides and Weekly News Sheet
Choir and Church Publications
Clerk of Session and Brews Brothers
Catering and 'Granny Watt'
Choir and Walking Group
Flower Ministry and Junior Choir
Handbell Choir and Tea and Talk
Parent and Toddlers and Catering

Joan Taylor 2011

Safeguarding and Pastoral Districts

Those who couldn't be with us this evening

Anne Graham 1990

Migrant Ministry and Catering

Elaine Molyneaux 2011

Choir and Building Fund

Richard Molyneaux 2011

Choir and Building Fund

Moving to committee

It is immensely important to recognise the work and ongoing work of Committee in the life of the church. It would take too long to thank directly all the members who serve in that important way or have served. As a grateful church community thanks Committee for all their work with fixtures, fittings and finance, we remember those who have served as Treasurer, those who have cared for our building and kept things in good order, those who deal with the money Sunday by Sunday. Another occasion will allow us to thank committee in a more appropriate way, but Committee has to be led by someone with a heart for the kingdom and tonight we would wish to recognise Jim McCurry for his 15 years (so far) service in this way as well as his running around with a water pistol at Holiday Bible Club.



(L-R) Kathryn Glover, Rev McKenzie, Karen and Jim McCurry.

That leads us into our children's work

We are immensely grateful to those who work with children and young people in this place, from our uniformed organisations to those who help out in creche and everything in between. Again, time would not allow us to thank them all directly tonight but 'thank you' to those who give so much to help the children and young people who come in through our doors. Again, on another more appropriate occasion we can recognise that more fully. However, Kidzone has now

been led and coordinated for 22 years by Karen McCurry and tonight we want to thank her for her ongoing work in this place, again thinking of her at Holiday

Bible Club too, more often than not pushing a squirty cream pie into Jim's face!

Singing

'Sing to the Lord a new song' the Psalmist tells us. It is a privilege to meet and sing together and we want to acknowledge tonight the ongoing commitment of our church choir and how they contribute so much to the rhythm of church life especially at those important times in the church year, Christmas and Easter, where we can reflect the wonder of those occasions. We are grateful to John Dallas for his 48 year service so far and we miss him as he is on holiday at present, we thank him and our choir and will be able to do that more fully again.

But in Cregagh we have been striving and will hopefully in days to come strive further to achieve the best of both, seeking to enjoy more informal yet reverent worship. It has been a great blessing to work with the Praise Group in this, the faithfulness of Nigel and Emma as well as all the others, again too many to mention, is so much valued and brings a life and vitality to the services. Kathryn Glover continues to show dedicated leadership with the Praise Group, very rarely do I suggest items because she has a knack for choosing what would fit an occasion and her commitment to Café Connect continues to be very much appreciated. Not only this but her continue presence in the church choir makes such a difference

The final block are former and retired elders

A very loose translation of the word elder in Hebrew is 'man with bread' the idea being a person who has wisdom and insight that comes with experience. We are blessed to have a number of retired and former elders who still play a very active role in the life of our congregation, again as I mention them I can't do justice to their service, I can't mention everything, but just like our current elders I wondered what one or two things come to mind when I think of them

Former Elders

Gordon Dunlop 1977

Barbara Dunlop 1977

Tommy McCluskey 1970

Dennison Mahood 1970

Robert Oliver 1984

Treasurer

Evergreens and Nursing Home visitation

Choir and Building Maintenance

Clerk of Session and the colour purple

Sound and vision (David Bowie) and replacing Betty Ferguson lightbulbs

Alan Spence 1990

Choir, Presbytery and General Assembly

Anne Sheppard 1984

Showing kindness by giving lifts to church to folk and helping me to get to know people when arrived in Cregagh

Sheena Stewart 1990

Malawi and Good Friday meditation

We are also blessed to have had the service of others whom I didn't have the privilege of working alongside with in roles of spiritual oversight, We thank them for their service to Kirk Session and the church family-

Yvonne Oliver 1984

Derrick Cartlilge 1966

Jacqueline Davey 1984

We also have some who cannot be with us this evening, we thank for their service and will recognise by sending on our token of thanks to:

Esme Allen - 1990

Leslie Ferguson- 1970

Jim Hill- 1981

Anne Gamble- 1981

Beth McCluskey –1990

One final presentation is made to Dennison Mahood. We are so thankful to his long and continuous service to our church family and in recognition of that, including of course his term as Clerk of Session, Kirk Session have agreed, and it is my privilege, to present to him this key. For now on the Session Room will be known as *'The Dennison Mahood Room'*.



Dennison Mahood receives the key to 'his' room from Rev McKenzie.

Tonight as the minister of Cregagh I wish to say thank you to everyone who contributes in any way to our life and witness, I hope no one was left out tonight, but as we recognise those who exercise spiritual leadership, we recognise that we are all in the work of the Kingdom together. We are united



(L-R) Bobby Irvine's neice Heather Moore, Rev McKenzie and Austin Moore.

in seeing God glorified, as everything we do, we do for the glory of God. So, from the big to the little, from a kind word of welcome to a cup of tea made, to a prayer said, let us all keep going, for he who has called us is faithful. While we will recognise the service of others in time more directly. how could we recognise the idea of that general service of everyone in a gesture? The Session thought of Bobby Irvine who quietly and faithfully served the congregation with a deep understated yet powerful faith, as he said to me many times 'I love going down to my church', this place is our church, it's about us- together.

As a token of this idea the count room will be renamed the '*Bobby Irvine Room*' and we pray that we will be inspired to serve God and each other in that same gentle yet dedicated way.

May God bless us everyone

Peter McMillan

...update on his summer assistantship

At a service on 21st September Edward took the opportunity to catch up with Peter McMillan to find out how things have been going and learn a bit about his summer assistantship experiences.

Edward: How many students for the ministry are studying?

Peter: At the minute there are six in my own class in my own year and there are about another ten or so in the first year and then there are five or six in third year.

Edward: what does a typical week in college look like?

Peter: Well tomorrow morning I start back into college classes with an hour or two on reformation history. Later in the day I've got Christian cultural en-

gement and then on Tuesday I've got my first day of Hebrew which I'm really excited for. That's because I really loved learning Greek!

Edward: What's your favourite area of study?

Peter: I think my first favourite area of study would probably be the Biblical languages. I think that's because I underestimated at the beginning just how much that would help with preaching and teaching in the church. My first step whenever I was studying a Bible passage would always have been to look at a commentary to see what it said. But now I look at the original text in the original language and I can maybe get to grips with what the text in the original language was actually saying.

Edward: How do you expect your timetable to differ this year from last year?

Peter: I'll have fewer assignments. Last year there were a lot of them. That means that this year I'll be able to focus a lot more on what I'm reading for the few assignments that I will have. I'll also have time to read more widely.

Edward: So where did you serve your summer assistantship?

Peter: I served in Clough and Seaforde Presbyterian Church. That's a double charge so I had the Seaforde service at 10am and then Clough was a little later at 11:30 am.

Edward: What are those churches like?

Peter: I was working alongside the Rev David Bingham the Minister for Clough and Seaforde Presbyterian Church. The first thing that I would say is that it's very different from what I'm used to with regards to context. I've been used to urban ministry but Clough and Seaforde is very different because it's a rural context. What I found was that people weren't in as much of a rush to get away especially after evening services. I can remember one man telling me it's only 9 o'clock in the evening and I was told by a number of people that he might keep me there until 1 o'clock in the morning! But they were really nice and I really enjoyed that fellowship the warmth of the people and was grateful for the opportunity to linger on a little bit to get to know them without the need to rush away. A typical day in the week would've normally included some sermon preparation and admin in the morning and then, in the afternoon, I would have the opportunity to do some pastoral visitation. There was an over

abundance of tea, coffee, cakes and biscuits thrown in my direction! I think they thought I needed a good feed but I think I enjoyed the pastoral visitation the most because it was an opportunity to get to know people and to guide them through the struggles that they were facing in life and to read scripture with them and to pray with them.

Rev Bingham went on holiday during the summer so there were three weeks when he was away. That was a bit of an experience even though I was really just keeping an eye on the 'shop'.

Edward: Were there any particular challenges or moments or any particular lessons that are memorable for you?

Peter: I think one of the things that really made me take stock was the opportunity not only to participate in a funeral but actually conduct the funeral. This wasn't with Clough and Seaforde. At the time David was vacancy convenor for other congregations and was away a lot. So in conducting the funeral there were three services - a service at the family home and the Church service and then at the graveside. I was with David when we visited the family before the funeral to organise it. I think that was invaluable for me because it gave me the opportunity to come alongside a grieving family to comfort them at one of the most difficult times in their lives. It was also a real opportunity to see God's work in people's lives.

This is another example of what summer assistantship does and it's important because it throws you into different circumstances. It was good for me to experience that.

Edward: Obviously that's what's been happening during the summer but you have also been practicing your craft of conducting worship and preaching with other congregations. Is there anywhere you've been and they've had you back which is always a good sign because you know you're obviously done something right. Have there been any highlights?

Peter: I might need Nicola to help me with the highlights. They were Dunganon and Moygashel, and Donegal and Stranorlar.. That is lovely part of the world and Nicola and I had the opportunity to stay in a vacant manse which we thought was haunted because doors would've opened by themselves and

you would've heard strange noises. I've also been back to preach in Mersey Street and I know that Thomas (Clarke) has also been back there a few times as well.

Edward: When do you find out when you will be going to your full assistantship?

Peter: I'll be interviewing for my assistantship in January and I'll find out where I'm headed around Easter time. I'll probably start in the summer and do one year part-time while still at college and then two years full-time.

Edward: tell me what can we pray for for you and Nicola as you continue on this journey together?

Peter: I think prayers first of all for Nicola and I to be together with cords that cannot be broken. As a couple what I've come to discover throughout the summer months and really through the last year is that I really couldn't complete this on my own. Nicola has been such an amazing help and the most sanctifying influence in my life as a Christian and as a believer. So I really couldn't do this without her, so please just pray that God would continue to bless our union together, bless our time together as a family. Because, and I was able to tell Edward this last week, 'two are soon to become three'. So pray for us as we expect our baby to come along sometime in the New Year.

It's still joy to be able to come here for the service in the morning and be early enough to come along for the prayer meeting at 10:30am.

In terms of full assistantship I could literally be placed anywhere so please pray that the Lord would have a hand on that. Also pray that it would be a place that would be accessible but also where we both get a benefit out of it in terms of ministry. Please pray that whenever we go there we will be amongst people in fellowship and that there will be plenty of opportunities for us to be encouraged and be built up in our faith as well.

Edward: thank you so much for Peter for your answers.

Father we thank You so much for Peter and the call You have placed upon his life. We thank You so much for Nicola and her support of Peter and the team that they are together. Bless them both as they continue on this jour-

ney. .Be among all of that for You know where Peter and Nicola will be going and Father we pray that You prepare that place for them.

God bless them both and help us as a congregation to support them and pray for them and encourage them as they go about all the things that You have put in place.

Junior Choir Concert

This years Junior Choir Concert was held on Tuesday 20th May under the leadership of Maureen Mulligan and Dorothy Platt. The children worked very hard learning items to entertain the audience and were very well supported as a result. The £730 raised from the proceeds of the concert are for the work of Emmanuel Ministries Calcutta (EMC) in Kolkatta, India.

In January 2025 the church gave £3,200 to EMC, most of which had been raised by Maureen Mulligan through various fund raising projects held in 2024.

125 Anniversary Gala Dinner



125
YEARS

We are all looking forward to the finale of our 125 celebrations on

Friday 24th April 2026 (7.00pm for 7.30pm) in the

Grand Ballroom, Stormont Hotel

Dress code: Formal

Cost: £49 per person (Payment by credit or debit card is welcome)

To book please contact Elaine Gillespie, Tel: 07990 610918 or see her at the 125 merchandise table after church. You can pay in full up front, or else pay a deposit of £10 per person to secure your place with the balance to be paid by the end of March 2026.

Menu choices will be sent to guests nearer the time.

LOVE GOD AND LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR

LIVING OUR FAITH

OPEN AND WELCOMING

GOOD WORSHIP

MEETING SOCIAL NEEDS

Family Fun Day

125th Birthday Party!



125
YEARS



LOVE GOD AND LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR

LIVING OUR FAITH

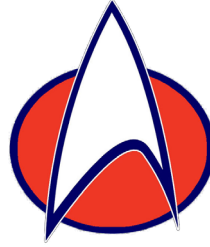
OPEN AND WELCOMING

GOOD WORSHIP

MEETING SOCIAL NEEDS



Starship 125



Holiday Bible Club

Back in August over 60 children and 25 helpers blasted off on our Starship 125 rocket as part of our special yearlong anniversary celebrations. With the help of Lunar Jim, Herbert Tarragon the alien, and the Watt family, they journeyed across the solar system, boldly going where no-one had gone before, as Karen McCurry our Holiday Bible Club Organiser explains.

We explored God's many wonders of the solar system and in particular learned about Jesus and one of his closest disciples, Peter. There was plenty of fun and games making lunar rockets, flying saucers, aliens, astronaut uniforms and even decorating some Cosmic Cakes to take home!

The Watt family entertained us as we explored the universe with a bit of 'Star Trekkin' along the way, but we had to keep our wits about us so as not to get sucked into that big Black Hole. ("Oh no, not the black hole?")

Our Minister, Edward, had to go away on a training course and could not join us in person that week, but thanks to NASA technology we managed to get a daily Message from our Supreme Commander on the Space Station even if he was many miles away.

A big thank you to everyone that helped make this a successful week and a fitting tribute for our 125th year. Where will we all be in 125 years time - Star Date 2250?




125
YEARS

Flower Festival

Maureen Mulligan, the Organiser of the Flower Festival 2025, tells us about the work she had undertaken before the Flower Festival which was held from 29th May ending on 1st June 2025 as part of our Church's 125th Anniversary year.

About a year before the Festival a decision was made on the dates on which it should be held. Choosing the end of May I had hoped that we would get groups or organisations from other areas coming for their outing. The next thing was to decide how many placements we could have, ensuring that there was enough space for each exhibit to be enjoyed and understood.

Thinking of events from the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, that I felt could be interpreted using plant material, I then read the related passages in the Bible and choose which ones we would use and decided on the Biblical quotes to be interpreted.

Edward suggested that we could use our twelve windowsills to represent something relevant to each decade. So, I started referring to Chronicles considering all possible things that happened within each decade, deciding on which event would represent each decade. I then made contact with all the Flower Arrangers I wanted to help design the arrangements. We all help



Maureen with one of the displays.

each other when organising a large event. I gave them the dates when they would be working and asked them to keep them free. I also asked a couple of people from the Church and some people from the two flower classes I teach to help with the arrangements.

I drew up a form for each of the arrangers, giving the Biblical quote or Decade that they would be designing. I asked them to write a short explanation of their interpretation. I also asked two people to produce exhibits representing India and Africa because our Church supports the Leprosy Mission and Emmanuel Ministries Calcutta in India and Nigeria and Malawi in Africa. I needed a list of the various flowers they wanted and how many of each variety, as well as the number and sizes of dishes and oasis they would need. I also needed to know which of the two working days they were coming as they would be given coffee and lunch or evening meal depending on what time they could come. They could work on the Wednesday from 9am to 9pm, and some came from work, or on the Thursday from 9am to 4pm as we needed to clear the church before the opening service. Over the two working days my catering group served a wide range of soups with wheaten followed by apple tart and ice cream.

When the forms were returned the orders for each variety of flower, dish and oasis had to be collated and double checked. I was so grateful for a friends help to ensure the totals required were accurate. I then made out the order to give to the wholesale. When the flowers were delivered to the Church a few of us split them into separate buckets for each design, ensuring that each person got what they had ordered.

I asked the people who had worked so harmoniously and efficiently at the Craft Fayre last year to look after all the catering. We had two meetings and decided on tea/coffee and selection from scones and traybakes available all day. Also on the Friday and Saturday from 12noon to 2pm we served lunch. As a group we decided on the choice for lunch as follows: Lasagne, Shepherds Pie, Chicken Pie, Gluten and Dairy free Lasagne and Vegan Baked Potato with vegetable Curry. A wide range of Salad ingredients was available for people to help themselves. For dessert we had Apple Pie and Ice Cream and tea and coffee were also available.

Some people who had lunch on the Friday came back to have lunch again on



the Saturday as they enjoyed it so much!

I ordered some of the food, and some was made by people on the catering team and I am very grateful to those who made scones and traybakes. I also approached Tesco and they provided all the salad items as part of their community outreach scheme.

I gave James all the details and asked him to produce advertising posters for the Flower Festival. I also typed up the details for him to produce the written Programme which would guide people around all the exhibits in the appropriate order. Three of us proof read it to make sure it flowed appropriately. I asked members of the Church if they would like to make a donation towards the cost of the flowers and got a good response. I also went to all the local shops and companies asking for sponsorship and if they would display an advertising poster for the Flower Festival.

I borrowed some large glass jars for donations as people viewed the displays and I asked Dennison if he could get some volunteers to Steward to welcome and direct people and also keep an eye on the glass donation jars. I bought two Boards and asked Nigel to mark out 'CPC 125' on them. I then bought artificial flowers in a colour that best matched the colours of the carpet and pews in the Church. I spent about 14 hours sticking all the flowers in place within the contour lines. These boards were placed on the front of the choral gallery before the first week of the years celebration

For the actual Flower Festival I designed and arranged five windowsill exhibits, the Communion Table design and Sauls conversion to Paul on the Damascus Road.

Whilst a lot of hidden preparation took place before the week of the Flower Festival, it certainly would not have been such a success both as an Outreach Project and as a Church Fundraiser if it wasn't for all who helped in many ways during the Festival week.

A big thank you to everyone who contributed and to Maureen for all the work she put in to making it such a success. The net proceeds for the Flower Festival were a fantastic £6,086 for church funds. A 2026 calendar featuring images of some of the displays is available to buy for £5.

This is **My Life!**

In this Christmas 2025 edition of Church News we are delighted to feature Lesley McKenzie, wife of Rev McKenzie and our PW Leader.



1. Where were you born and brought up?

I was born and brought up in Comber with my mum and dad and my older brother and our cat Jessie and terrapin Mikey.

2. Tell us about your family?

As most of you know I've been married to Edward now for 15 years and we have been blessed with three lovely children, Alfie (14), Esmé (12) and Jack (9). We also have four pets - two black and white cats, Liq-uorice and Dinah, and two dogs, Scribbles, a collie, and Thorin an Irish wolfhound.

3. Tell us about your early church life?

My home congregation is 2nd Comber Presbyterian where I attended the Sunday school and the Girls Brigade. My father was brought up in the Salvation Army so we went to Belfast Citadel for some special services.

4. Where were you educated?

I was educated at Comber primary school then moved on to Down Academy in Downpatrick for secondary education. I left at the end of year 12 and went to study for a Diploma in Childcare at college in Newtownards. A number of years after this I went back to full time education to study biological sciences.

5. Tell us about your career?

I started off with a summer job working at my local leisure centre as a youth leader. For over five years I worked in a day nursery finishing off as a supervisor. Not long after Alfie was born I became sexton at Killinchy Presbyterian church. When we moved to Warrenpoint I left work but

since returning to Belfast I took up the role of care assistant in the community which I have been doing now for six years. It can be quite a demanding job but it is also a great privilege.

6. What are your main interests and hobbies?

I'm a big fan of ice hockey and our home team, the Belfast Giants. I am interested in sci-fi and pop culture and anything Disney! I also serve as an officer in 2nd Comber Girls' Brigade.

7. What is your favourite piece of music?

This is a hard one to answer as I do like a wide range of music but honestly I would listen to a lot of worship music.

8. What is your favourite hymn?

I do have a number of hymns that I really like but my favourite would be 'All creatures of our God and King'.

9. What is your favourite book?

I will admit that I'm not a bigger reader - I'd rather wait to watch the movie but one of my favourite books that I did read was Fantastic Mr Fox. I also quite liked the Harry Potter books.

10. Have you travelled beyond the British Isles?

Yes, I've been to many places over Europe from Portugal to Bulgaria and I've also travelled to South Africa and Namibia. More recently we also spent time in Florida in the most magical place on earth (!).

11. What is your favourite film?

Being a big child at heart and a fan of Disney my favourite film has to be Beauty and the Beast - the animation not live action.

12. How do you relax?

If I'm honest I'm not very good at relaxing but I do try by watching 'Edward approved' binge worthy tv shows or a long bubble bath.

13. What is your favourite day or time of the week?

Definitely any game day to watch the hockey or Friday mornings when Ed-

ward and I are both off and we go out for breakfast which we name 'Fry Friday'.

14. When was the last time you cried and why?

I tend not to cry very often but when I do it's for random things like on the plane on the way home from DisneyWorld.

15. What is your indulgence?

Definitely chocolate, especially an Oreo sandwich bar.

16. What items could you not live without?

Definitely couldn't live without my hair straighteners and my phone and my stuffed toy dog of 30 years whose nickname is Stinky! (His real name is Rover).

17. Have you any phobias?

I'm not a big fan of flying but my worst phobia is definitely spiders. Thankfully in our house Alfie is known as Spider-Man as he has no fear of them.

18. What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

I try my best not to over think things. If there's a lot to do just focus on one thing at a time.

19. What are you most proud of?

I had the privilege of representing Ireland at the world championships of trampolining in the Netherlands when I was a young adult.

Also, since Edward and I got married I have taken on more responsibilities in church which often involves me leading or being in front of people. This is not something that comes naturally to me but I think I've grown into it.

20. If there was something you could change about yourself what would it be?

I wouldn't lose my temper just as easily and be better organised.

Thank you!

Cregagh 125 in 2025!



125
YEARS

Cregagh Presbyterian Church was founded on 7th December 1900 and the congregation will celebrate its 125th birthday or quasiquicentennial anniversary, during 2025/26.

By now you will all probably have seen our range of 125 Anniversary Merchandise on display in the Welcome Suite. This has been selling well and will be available to purchase throughout the year, but our actual 'shop' will only be in the Allen Hall at any special 125 events or services each month.

If there is ever something that you would like in-between these times, please contact Karen McCurry to make your request on 07552 606550.

Programme of remaining special events in our 'Cregagh 125' year.

December

Wednesday 3rd

'Grill the Godsquad' outreach evening

Sunday 7th

125 Anniversary Service

January

Saturday 17th

Guides Big Breakfast

Friday 23rd

Cregagh 125 Lecture

February

Friday 20th

'Desert Island Discs' outreach evening

March

Friday 6th

Cregagh 125 'Mastermind'

April

Post

Easter Primary School church tour mornings

Friday 24th

125 Anniversary Gala Dinner in Stormont Hotel
(tickets £49 - see page 28 for details)

Sunday 26th

Closing 125 Celebration Service

Merchandise Price List

The perfect Christmas gift!

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Mug (in box) | £6.00 |
| Torch key ring | £3.00 |
| Teddy with T-shirt | £8.00 |
| Selection of pens | £2.00 |
| Cotton tea towels | £8.00 |
| Cotton aprons | £10.00 |
| A5 Notebooks (Black) | £5.00 |
| A5 Notebooks (Orange & pen) | £7.00 |
| Tote bags (Recycled cotton) | £3.00 |
| 125 Anniversary Bugs | £1.00 |
| Cregagh Notelets | £2.00 for pack of 4 |
| Handmade coasters | £4 each or 4 for £15 |
| Christmas cards | £4 for 5 cards |

**Hand cut Belfast
Crystal items can be
made to order.**

We can now take card payments.

Christian Aid

at Cregagh!



Cregagh again pulled out all the stops for a wonderful Christian Aid fundraiser held on Saturday 10th May. A big thank you to everyone for the support we received, and special thanks to Robyn McCullough who organised a coffee morning in her home which raised £631.25 as well as co-ordinating the Saturday fundraiser.

A grand total of £2,131.25 for Christian Aid was raised through your generosity.



(L-R) Rosemary Patton, Ruth Hill and Christine Sharpe in the kitchen.



(L-R) Beth McNair, Wilma McCluskey, Ivan Taylor and Lilly Taylor enjoy a cup of tea.



(L-R) Esmé McKenzie, Barbara Dunlop and Sarah Jennings



(L-R) Jack McKenzie with Drew Haire.



(L-R) Rev McKenzie with Janice and Angel enjoying a hotdog.



Richard Molyneaux and Heather Sharpe on door duty.

While in Malawi in 2023, those travelling from Cregagh had the pleasure of being invited to the home of Kenneth and Christine Nsona, long-time friends of Sheena and Harry Stewart. The travelling team benefited greatly from their hospitality and enjoyed a beautiful meal, prepared over charcoal, in between breaks in the electricity. So, it was a pleasure to be able to welcome Kenneth and Christine to Cregagh in August of this year, as James McCormick writes.

News from Malawi



Christine has been in Ireland and worshipped with our congregation before, but this was the first time Kenneth has travelled this far. It was great to have them take part in our service and to share food with them afterwards. In conversation we heard about the ongoing struggles in Malawi – the continued increase in inflation; the trade wars with neighbouring countries; the lack of everyday essentials; and the worrying corruption in government and amongst leaders. This again only highlights how important your generosity is. Thanks to the visit of Kenneth and Christine we were able to hear first-hand how you are making a difference



The Malawi Working Group with Kenneth and Christine Nsona.

Along with the regular giving that is so beneficial to our friends in Malawi, we are also thankful to those who raised money through the Belfast marathon in May 2025. A huge thanks goes to Katie Simons, Lydia Easton, Aaron Diver, Adam Skeet and Alan McNair for running the miles, and to all those who sponsored them, and in turn helped raise over £1,000 for the continued supply of school fees, porridge and other supplies for the children and volunteers at Chifundo3

in Blantyre. The working group continues to receive updates and photographs from our friend Lessa at Chifundo3. They are ever thankful for the help they receive and out of 11 students taking recent exams nine have passed with good grades.

Given the ever-worsening situation in Malawi, the working group recently took the decision to increase the support to Chifundo3 and other projects, including regular donations over the next few months to Ndirande Makata CCAP church, for them to support those most at risk during these difficult times. The group are also exploring the opportunity to fit-out a secondary school classroom at Makatta with furniture, and possibly supply further teaching resources.

Prayer points

- ***Thank God for the generosity of the people of Cregagh that has supported the people and projects in Malawi over many years***
- ***Give thanks for the safe travel that Kenneth and Christine enjoyed and that God will bless them and their family***
- ***Pray that the Malawi Working Group will be granted the wisdom to make the right decisions about what projects to support moving forward.***
 - ***Pray that God will bless and enrich all aspects of global mission that Cregagh supports; in Malawi and Calcutta; through the Leprosy Mission, Christian Aid and Tearfund; and PCI's United Appeal and World Development Appeal.***



Rev McKenzie with Kenneth and Christine Nsona.

Giving

If you would like to support our work in Malawi, on average £2 per month feeds one child and £10 per month pays school fees. With the addition of Gift Aid we can also help buy uniforms. You can set up a Direct Debit, or give a one-off donation, using these bank details:

Sort Code: 98-01-60 A/C No: 13549067

A/C Name: Cregagh Presbyterian Church and label the donation with your name.

Biblical - Spiritual - Strategic

Rev McKenzie has recently emphasised the importance for us of thinking '*Biblically, Spiritually and Strategically*' in moving forward into the next 125 years of the congregation. We have undoubtedly spent a lot of time doing a lot of good things. We are a warm and welcoming fellowship but part of our challenge is how do we harness that resource to ensure that this congregation is still here in another 125 years. The world is changing and is crowded with secular 'noise', even on a Sunday, but we have the call to do what Jesus told his disciples to do of reaching out into the world and letting others know about Him.

We can no longer rely on the 'build it and they will come' approach to ensure that Cregagh congregation will be here in 125 years. With Reconfiguration of Ministry being the strategic element increasingly focusing the minds of Presbyterians, we need to think prayerfully about how we use and develop our talents and use what advantage we have as a church in the middle of the Cregagh Road. Even as the demography of the road has changed and will continue to change.

So what do we do? We need to know and understand what we do well and why. But we also need to see what we need to change. IN the Reconfiguration question one of the big aspects is examination of the spiritual health of congregations. This is where prayer and Bible Study are a concern for Cregagh. Whilst they are happening, they are not growing and to be a spiritually healthy congregation we need to grow together in our knowledge of God . This is not a new concept to Cregagh - it is in our Vision document and Bible study is central to that.

So to ensure that the Vision is fulfilled and be spiritually, healthy Kirk Session has agreed that the April 2025 report of the Eldership Working Group should be accepted. In their report the working group proposed that Cregagh's Kirk Session should follow a 'portfolio' arrangement, rather than the District arrangement which has been in place for many years. The portfolio arrangement would come into effect around September after which each elder would meet with Rev McKenzie for a 'brief' about what each one

involves, setting up whatever working groups are needed to assist. In practice this means that elders will no longer deliver communion tokens to members homes. Instead, tokens will be available for collection from the church vestibule during the two weeks prior to each communion service. Members are prayerfully encouraged to take part in the Sacrament of The Lord's Supper, which is celebrated on five occasions throughout the year.

In accordance with PCI guidelines, the Kirk Session is required to review the Communion Roll periodically. As part of this process, consideration may be given to removing the names of members who have not participated in communion within the past three years. It is recognised, however, that there are important mitigating circumstances to be taken into account in non-participation, such as illness, being housebound or studying abroad to mention but a few.

An election to Kirk Session is also planned.

Kirk Session members' list of portfolios with responsibilities:

1. Visitation of those with pastoral need (Joan Taylor / Dorothy Platt)

Two elders working together to keep a record of visits carried out by a team of pastoral visitors and report to the Minister if there are any issues that need his attention. A list of those who require these visits would be put together and reviewed at each Session meeting

2. Nursing/Residential homes (Rebecca Clarke)

Keeping a record of visits carried out to Residential and Nursing homes (by committee reps, pastoral visitors etc.) and report to the Minister if there are any issues that need his attention. A list of those in Residential and Nursing settings would be reviewed at each Session meeting. The elder would also ensure the list is up to date with family contact details etc.

3. Hospitality (Anne Graham)

Responsible for welcoming and making connections with those on a Sunday morning, identifying those who do not engage much outside of Sunday morning worship and encourage them towards deeper involvement. Get alongside visitors and new members

4. Mission and Community (David Gillespie)

'Keep their ear to the ground' about things in the local area and prayerfully bring ideas to Session about how we might reach out in the parish

5. Overseas Mission (Elaine Molyneaux)

Commit to pray for the Mission organisations that we support, bringing an

update to each Session meeting and keeping in contact with the Mission Support Group, help with spreading awareness about our overseas links

6. Church organisations link (Robert McNair)

Be the contact point for any concerns or issues relating to church organisations and report to the Minister if there are any issues that need his attention. This elder would give an update on the 'morale' of these organisations at each meeting. This would involve 'popping in' to visit organisations occasionally and once a year having a informal version of the organisational forum

7. Prayer and Discipleship (Maureen Mulligan)

Oversee the organisation of 'Blobs' groups across the congregation and work with the Minister to explore how prayer, prayer ministry and Bible study can become more part of the rhythm of congregational life.

8. Youth and young families (Avril Pollock)

Build deeper connections with young families in the congregation and identify ways they can be brought together and encouraged to get more involved with church life.

9. Deputy Clerk of Session/Administration Elder (Beth McNair and Richard Molyneaux)

Two elders to keep Session up to date about issues that fall out of the usual realm of the Clerk of Session such as Charity Commission regulations, Child protection etc. as well as assisting the Clerk of Session with Session routine and duties.

10. Clerk of Session (Michael Graham)

Visiting format

The Minister would focus on Hospitals, bereavements, pastoral issues and special requests, one of which would not be reported to Session due to confidentiality or sensitivity. A committee rep knocks the door of every member of the congregation at least three times a year. Kirk Session identify those who need additional or more frequent visitation and assign them a pastoral visitor. Committee reps and pastoral visitors report back to the Visitation elders (Joan and Dorothy) and pass on any concerns to them, or directly to the Minister if that is felt more appropriate.

This new format is a major change for the Minister, Kirk Session and the congregation. Please pray that this new approach meets the spiritual and pastoral needs of the congregation as we look towards the next 125 years.

PW Concert

...featuring The Imperial Guards Flute Band and Cregagh Handbell Choir

PW presented an excellent musical evening on Friday 21st March in the church featuring Cregagh Handbell Choir, the Imperial Guards Flute Band and soloist David Curry. Proceeds were in aid of Mission Funds and in all £1,400 was raised for Missions and PCI PW projects.



Left: The Imperial Guards Flute Band



Below: Cregagh Handbell Choir



Above: David Curry and his daughter Zoe.
Right: Compères for the evening were John Dallas and Dennison Mahood





Reconfiguration of Ministry

the 'why' behind the 'r' word

There has been much discussion in all Presbyteries, including East Belfast, about 'Reconfiguration of Ministry'. The volume level on that discussion is likely to increase further as the time for decisions approaches. The East Belfast Presbytery Reconfiguration of Ministry Working Group will be visiting congregations in the Presbytery throughout the autumn and winter to gather information and views.

The following article appeared in the Presbyterian Herald back in December 2024 / January 2025. In the article the Deputy Clerk of the General Assembly, Dr David Allen, explains why 'reconfiguration of ministry' is such an important topic for PCI to grapple with.

It's happened with local branches of banks and post offices. It's talked about with schools and hospitals. Is it going to happen now with Presbyterian churches?

Restructuring, realignment, redeployment, reorganisation, rationalisation. Lots of words beginning with 'r' can be used. But whatever the word, it seems to boil down to the same thing – an organisation trying to cut costs and save money by having fewer of them, whether it's banks, or post offices, or whatever. It might make financial or business sense, but many can be left feeling that the people who use them get a reduced service, with the most vulnerable in society being disadvantaged most.

In the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the favoured word beginning with 'r' has been 'reconfiguration'. 'Reconfiguration of ministry' is a phrase that's been used a lot at the past few General Assemblies. Some presbyteries have been talking about it already, and some kirk sessions and congregations have had to engage with it.

The Assembly in June 2024 accepted a report that was the culmination of three years' work and consultation across the Church. In doing so, it agreed that a process of reconfiguration of ministry should take place across the denomination.

So, is this just the Church's version of corporate speak, which really means closing churches and linking others so that money and ministers are saved, but ordinary members get a reduced service? Or is the Church different, and is there more to it?

PCI has lost about one-fifth of its contributing families over the past 10 years... Reconfiguration of ministry – why?

Why does the Assembly believe it needs to do this? Is it really necessary? Could we not just carry on as we have been for many years, with the odd tweak here and there?

There are a number of things about this that Herald readers will know to be true.

There's a shortage of ministers. Readers will know that by looking at the back pages of this magazine, and noticing that the list of vacant congregations has been getting longer and longer. By 2027, there will be more than 70 vacancies in PCI. That's about one-fifth of all our charges.

There's also a decline in numbers. PCI has lost about one-fifth of its contributing families over the past 10 years, with the picture much worse in parts of Belfast particularly. Some Herald readers will know this by looking around them in church on a Sunday morning, and seeing spaces where there used to be people.

None of us need to be reminded that there has been a cost-of-living crisis over the past few years. It costs more to live than it used to. That goes for churches as well, because they have to pay for heat and light, insurance, repairs and salaries. These have all gone up, so it takes more to make ends meet, and that can be a real challenge for many congregations, especially when there are fewer people needing to pay for more.

One other thing that readers may or may not know, is that we have too many meeting houses – more than we need, with some of them in the wrong place – not close to where people are. The temptation can be to think that there was a time when we did need them all, and they were all fairly full. But that's not true. Some of our churches were built because of disagreements and splits, where some people left a church, and they went up the road, or across the fields, and built another meeting house. When the General Assembly was formed in 1840, and the different churches came under the one denominational umbrella, very few of the extra ones were closed, they were kept. Most of them are still in use, around 185 years later. So, we have too many church buildings, but it's getting harder to maintain them all, and harder to justify retaining them all.

All of these things are true, and if PCI was a business, we would be tempted to manage this decline, to keep what seems strong (or big), and close what seems weak (or small) in order to save money and ministers.

But PCI isn't a business, it's part of the church of Jesus Christ. He is our Head, and we are to follow and obey him. The Lord Jesus doesn't call us to manage decline, but to go into the world and make disciples of all nations. He calls us to be salt and light in society. He calls us to worship him and be more like him. He gives us a spiritual mission, not a materialistic one – to evangelise and witness to him. He calls us to take up our cross and follow him, to live sacrificially, to be in the world but not of it. He calls us to be fruitful, with the fruit of the Spirit, and look out at harvest fields – people to be gathered into his kingdom.

So, while we might be tempted to look inward, circle the wagons, and hold what we have by managing the decline, that's not what we hear Christ calling us to do in his Word, that's not why we have been given the Holy Spirit, and that's not why PCI is having a reconfiguration of ministry.

The Lord Jesus doesn't call us to manage decline, but to go into the world and make disciples of all nations.

Rather, it's because we want to be more like what he wants us to be. We want to do more of what he wants us to do for him, and do it better – in the power of the Holy Spirit, in faith and obedience. We want to look out and reach out to those around us – those we share this island with, whoever they are. And all of that means using the resources that the Lord has entrusted to us as faithfully

and effectively as we can, so that we can be and do what he wants today, and in the future.

This is why PCI is having a reconfiguration of ministry. It's definitely not to manage decline, it's to use more effectively what the Lord has entrusted to us, in ministry and mission, praying that he will enable us to be and do what he wants, right across the island of Ireland, today and in the future.

This will affect all of us in some way or other, in our congregations and presbyteries. As well as that, it will affect the Church as a denomination too, because alongside this reconfiguration, the Church is reviewing its central structures and buildings – Assembly Buildings, Union College, how we train our ministers. Again, this is so that we can be and do what the Lord wants. Everyone will be affected by this and everyone has a part to play – above all by praying. As in all that we do, unless the Lord builds the house, the labour is in vain. So more than anything, we need to ask the Lord to build his Church; in his mercy to pour out his Spirit upon us, to work in us and through us; to be pleased to use us as his instruments across this island, and to give us wisdom, faith and obedience to follow his lead and submit to his will.

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YOUTH 'BIG' NIGHT AND BIBLE CLASS



Left: Bible Class led a beautiful Easter Youth Service on 6th April 2025 on the theme of the colours of Easter. The Bible Class put the service together and chose the readings to tell the story of Easter in a very thought provoking way.

Right: Youth 'BIG' Night started back on 22nd August 2025 with Bible teaching, games and, of course, food! YBN meets on a Saturday evening once a month. For more information contact youth@creaghpresbyterian.org



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OLDE TYME PSALM SERVICE - 23RD MARCH 2025

A special Psalm Service was held on 23rd March in the church with the service conducted with psalms being sung without accompaniment of a musical instrument. A challenge for the choir! Many members of the choir and congregation also wore Victorian or Edwardian dress to add to the occasion.



CREGAGH 125 MUSEUM

The Cregagh 125 Museum is on display in the McIntyre Suite. We are grateful for the photos, documents and items that have been brought in and a big 'Thank You' to Dennison Mahood and Carol and Leslie Ferguson for putting everything together.

Please enjoy spending time looking through everything and invite others to do so.



THE CREGAGH PHOTO BOOTH

'CREGAGH SPEEDSTERS' (MALAWI RELAY TEAM) - SUNDAY 4TH MAY 2025

To raise money to support Cregagh's friends in Malawi, Katie Simons, Lydia Easton, Alan McNair, Aaron Diver and Adam Skeet bravely entered the Belfast Marathon Relay, on Sunday 4th May. The £1,300 (excluding Gift Aid) raised went towards the sponsoring of students, supplying porridge for the children and assisting with maintenance projects in Malawi.



Above: Adam Skeet with Dylan and Esme.



Above: Alan McNair with Rachel



Left: Lydia Easton proudly shows her medal.



Right: Arron Diver with Ada and Seth.

THE CREGAGH PHOTO BOOTH

THE PAGEANT - 7TH NOVEMBER 2025

Storm Amy couldn't dampen the enthusiasm nor wash away the talent (well for some at least!) of Cregagh folk who finally stepped onto the stage on 7th November for the Pageant. A huge thankyou must go to Karen McCurry for all her hard work in directing this very successful and enjoyable event. There were many surprises with a lot of laughter and fellowship thrown in.



Above and Right: The Manse family; a Blues Brother; and three 'Likely Lads'.

HARVEST THANKSGIVING AND GIFT DAY - 12TH OCTOBER 2025

Harvest Thanksgiving is a wonderful opportunity for us to thank God for the bounty and beauty of the earth. Cregagh's organisations pulled out all the stops this Harvest, under the watchful eye of Maureen Mulligan, to create magnificent windowsill displays

The Kirk Session windowsill display was a representation of John 15 v5, *'I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.'*



THE CREGAGH PHOTO BOOTH

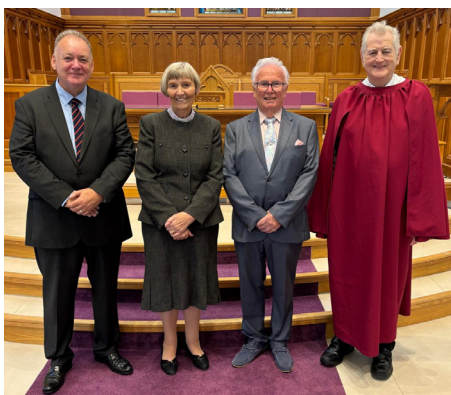
VISITING MINISTERS - CREGAGH 125 CELEBRATIONS



Rev McKenzie with Rev Hastings McIntyre who preached on Sunday 18th May 2025.



(L-R) Dennison Mahood, Lesley McKenzie, Rev McKenzie, Rev Dr Brian Brown, Lesley Brown and John Dallas. Rev Brown preached on Sunday 27th July 2025.



(L-R) Michael Graham, Rev Amanda Best, Dennison Mahood and John Dallas. Rev Best preached on Sunday 10th August 2025.



Above: (L-R) Dennison Mahood, Rev Purvis Campbell, Rev McKenzie, Rev Hastings McIntyre and Michael Graham. Rev Campbell preached on Sunday 8th June 2025.



Left: Rev McKenzie with Rev Dr Jim Campbell who preached on Sunday 12th October

Right: (L-R) Dennison Mahood, Rev Ernie Boggs, Rev McKenzie and Michael Graham. Rev Boggs preached at Cafe Connect on Sunday 14th September 2025. Rev Dr Harold MacConnell preached at the morning service



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BOYS BRIGADE - CELEBRATION SERVICE - 23RD NOVEMBER 2025



Above: the 70th Belfast Company with leaders from the 25th Belfast at rear of the photograph.

This special service commemorated the work of The Boys' Brigade. This included our former company, the 70th Belfast, and also more recently, the 25th Belfast Company which we now share alongside our Methodist friends. The Chief Executive of the Belfast Battalion of The Boys' Brigade, Mr Paul McCarroll, gave the sermon at the service.

Right: the 25th Belfast Company



ODDS AND ENDS



Remembrance Day 9th November 2025 - our wonderful Uniformed Organisations



Anne Graham with Esme Skeet and Esmé McKenzie have been grocery items collecting for the Flourish appeal again this year.

CHURCH RECORDS

CHRISTMAS 2024 TO DATE

Baptisms

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| 5th January 2025 | Anjal Katsitsarang Kuzaty <i>Son of Kuzaty Thomas & Janet Gankon-Thomas</i> |
| 16th February 2025 | Freya Eliza Clark <i>Daughter of Thomas & Rebecca Clarke</i> |
| 20th May 2025 | Max Robert Bailie & Sophie Emily Bailie <i>Children of Cathryn & Jonathan Bailie</i> |
| 25th May 2025 | Arthur Thomas George Jordan <i>Son of Michael and Pamela Jordan</i> |
| 16th November 2025 | Maureen Hurndal (adult baptism) |

Marriages

None

Deaths

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 21st January 2025 | Amy (Martha Amelia) Craig |
| 30th January 2025 | Fred Cartlidge |
| 9th February 2025 | Helen Cartlidge. |
| 8th May 2025 | Margaret Rodgers |
| 9th May 2025 | Patricia (Pat) Dunwoody |
| 10th August 2025 | George Smith |
| 22nd August 2025 | John Forsythe |
| 23rd September 2025 | Laurence Keys |
| 25th September 2025 | Anne Gamble |



CHRISTMAS 2025 to EASTER 2026

For full up to date details of services and Cregagh 125 events
please see page 40 of this Church News or visit
www.cregaghpresbyterian.org

NOVEMBER



Sunday 30th Advent Carol Service 11am

DECEMBER

Sunday 7th 125 Anniversary Service 11am

Sunday 14th KidZone Christmas Tree Service Service 11am

'Carols in the Car Park' 4pm

Sunday 21st Handbell Service 11am

Candlelight Service of Nine Lessons and Carols Carols 7pm

Weds 24th Christmas Eve Service 11.30pm

Thurs 25th Christmas Morning Service 9am

Sunday 28th Morning Worship - last Sunday of 2025 11am

Weds 31st 'Last Day of 2025' Service 4pm



JANUARY

Sunday 4th New Year Communion 11am

Sunday 11th Morning Worship 11am

Cafe Connect - Rev Corinna Heron 6.30pm

Sunday 18th Morning Worship - Rev John Murdock 11am

Bible Study - 2 Chronicles..4pm

Sunday 25th Morning Worship..11am



FEBRUARY

- Sunday 1st Morning Service 11am
Choral Evening Service 7pm
- Sunday 8th Morning Worship - Rev Christopher Glover 11am
- Sunday 15th Morning Worship 11am
Bible Study - Ezra 4pm
- Sunday 22nd Thinking Day 11am

MARCH



- Sunday 1st Morning Worship 11am
- Sunday 8th Morning Worship 11am
Cafe Connect 6.30pm
- Sunday 15th Mothering Sunday 11am
- Sunday 22nd Morning Worship - Rev Stephen Moore
Bible Study - Nehemiah 4pm
- Sunday 29th Palm Sunday Communion 11am

APRIL



- Weds 1st Easter Meditation Service with The Salvation Army 7.30pm
- Thurs 2nd Maundy Thursday Communion 7.30pm
- Friday 3rd.....Good Friday 'Lights Out' Service 11am
- Sunday 5th.....Easter Day Service 11am
- Sunday 19th Easter Youth Service 11am
Bible Study - Esther. 4pm
- Sunday 26th 125 Closing Service - Rev Dr Allen Sleith 11am