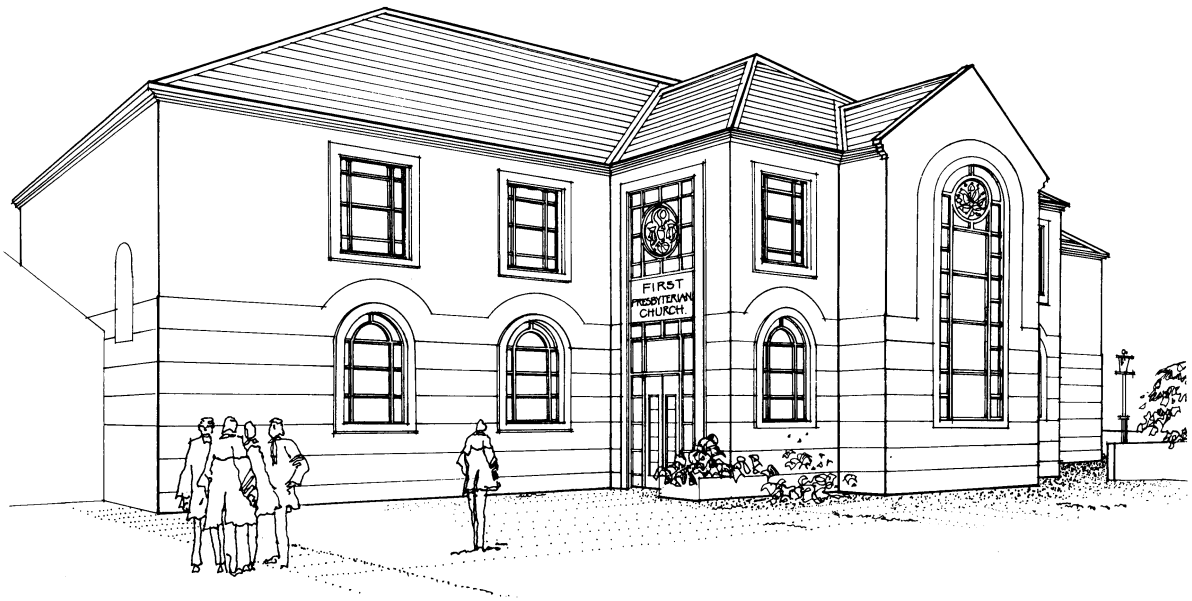


FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH NEWTOWNARDS



1st Presbyterian Church exists to worship and glorify God and to be used by God to introduce people to Jesus Christ and the joy to be found in knowing Him as Saviour and walking daily with Him.

INFORMATION BOOKLET

Introduction

Newtownards is the second largest town in the Ards and North Down district Council with a population of 28216 (2011 census) accounting for 1.56% of the N Ireland population. Of these people 19.93% were under 16 whilst 15.76% were 65+; 48.41% were male whilst 51.59% were female. The median age of the population is 40.

98.69% of the population is white; 79.62% (18,816) belong to or were brought up in the Protestant and other Christian religion whilst 8.34% claim adherence to the Roman Catholic faith. There are almost 30 Christian churches of various denominations within the town.

Almost 70% of households were owner occupied, the remaining 30% were rented. 20.77% of the population possessed a degree or higher qualification and within the 16-74 population only 4.61% were unemployed.

It is estimated that between 2015 and 2025 the 65+ population will increase by 29% and the 85+ population will increase by 46%. According to NISRA statistics the school age population for the area currently standing at 33767 will peak in 2021 at 33900 and decline to 31896 by 2030. The current preschool and primary age population is already in decline and from its present standing at 7016 and 13740 respectively will fall to 6382 and 12413 by 2030.

The Congregation

1st Presbyterian Church Newtownards is the oldest of seven Presbyterian churches serving the town of Newtownards. Founded in the 1650's the congregation has been bearing witness to God's love to the community for almost four centuries. The church has been on its present site since 1815. The church has played a prominent role in the history and development of the town and its Ministers have been seen as important leaders and spokespersons within the town in previous years. Although smaller than in times past the congregation continues to play an active role in the local community as it bears witness to Christ's saving power.

The current congregation of 250 families is committed and active in the Lord's work within the town with almost 100 volunteering in some capacity within the Church. Average attendance at morning service is around 150 and evening worship approx. 30. There are 239 members on the Communicants' Role with 145 attending at least one communion service during 2019.

The 2020 accounts highlight an income through personal giving of almost £140k and a credit balance of £97k. The congregation is in the process of selling its existing Manse and purchasing a new one. It is intended to have this completed prior to the arrival of the new Minister.

The age profile of the current congregation is as follows:-

% AGE PROFILE OF CONGREGATION

0-3.	0.7%
4-11.	5.0%
12-17.	3.8%
18-25.	4.8%
26-39.	10.2%
40-64.	29.8%
65+.	45.7%

44% of the congregation is male and 56% is female.

The church runs a varied programme for all ages (see appendix 1). In addition to these events a small group of members undertake a weekly Doorstep Mission to our Parish; an annual Holiday Bible club is organised each Summer attended by over 100 primary aged children. The congregation collaborates with other Presbyterian churches for a series of events and services as well as working with other Christian denominations to tackle social problems within the town through the Link. Members are active on Boards of Governors of local schools as well as being involved in a range of statutory, voluntary and community organisations.

Session has developed a positive and active approach to overseas Mission over many years. A Missionary sub-committee prepares an annual Missionary plan for approval by Session to support the work of a range of organisations through PCI United Appeal. It also supports one of our elders who is presently working for Care for Cambodia in Phnom Penh.

Session has undertaken a wide ranging review of this work, facilitated by Rev David Thompson using the PCI materials on Fruitfulness, in preparation for the calling of a new Minister. They have produced a draft Mission Strategy and would be keen to discuss this with our new Minister taking account of their views and ideas on future provision.

Key Priorities

The following priorities have been identified as important in moving the congregation forward:-

Leadership

- Develop a more strategic approach to leadership development and succession planning
- Grow the pool from which to draw potential leaders by increasing the numbers of members with young families
- Develop active partnerships with other congregations

Outreach

- Reorganise and rationalise the current number of organisations
- Sustain and develop an online presence
- Taking the Gospel to a wider community in word and deed

Building a Church community

- Continue to develop a vibrant Church family as the core resource for our work
- Cater for a wider variety of people's needs within a community of faith

Worship

- Develop new models of worship based upon engagement and participation
- Explore new examples of Christian music as a vehicle for enhancing worship
- Look for ways to continue to meet the needs of our senior members in worship

Discipleship

- Recognise and invest in our key resource - our people
- Continue to develop ways in which to educate our members spiritually
- Give opportunities for active discipleship for more of our members

Skills and Attributes of a new Minister

This is an ambitious set of priorities for the congregation going forward over the next number of years. Consequently, Session believe that our next Minister should possess the following :-

Key Attributes

1. An ability to preach God's word in a way which is alive and relevant
2. An ability to be a good pastor to the congregation
3. Possess a commitment to outreach with a passion for mission at home and abroad
4. Possess a vision for building a vibrant and growing church community within 1st Ards which attracts younger families
5. An ability to develop innovative forms of worship which is meaningful to all ages
6. An awareness of the importance of shared leadership both within the congregation and between the Presbyterian congregations within Newtownards

Key skills

1. Good communication skills
2. Good interpersonal skills
3. Good social skills with people of all ages
4. Good leadership skills
5. An understanding of the importance of social media and internet and its potential for outreach

Conclusion

As a congregation we have been blessed over the past two decades by the work and leadership of our previous Minister Rev Jim Campbell. As a result of his pastoring we have a core of highly committed members who live out their Christian witness within their community. It is hoped that under God's guidance we will call a new Minister who will build on these foundations which have been laid and further develop the work and witness of the congregation to the glory of God and the advancement of Christ's kingdom at home and abroad.

APPENDIX 1

Event/Organisation	Age range	Frequency	Average attendance	% not members of this cong.
Lighthouse	3-7	Weekly	10	
The Rock/Bible Class	8 - 16	Weekly	10	
Youth Fuse	12- 18	Weekly	10	
Badminton	18 +	Weekly	4	2%
Presbyterian Women	18+	Monthly	45	
Connect	60+	Fortnight	25	1%
Girls' Brigade	3-18	Weekly	45	75%
Friendship Hour	55+	Weekly	40	2%
Boys Brigade	5 -18	Weekly	50	55%
Prayer Meeting	50 - 90	Fortnight	12	
Christian Endeavour	4 – 9	Weekly	6	
Shortbread Group (Widows)	55+	Monthly	15	
Indoor Bowls	45+	Weekly	25	
Café First	1-75	Weekly	35	5%
Youth Zone	8 -14	Fortnight	15	100%
Home Bible Study Groups	18 – 93	Fortnight	50 - 60	

