

BPC

YEAR BOOK

2016



Bloomfield
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

TO KNOW JESUS AND SHARE HIS LOVE

BPC Core Values

Bloomfield is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and a part of the universal Church. We seek to know Jesus Christ and to share his love.

We seek to know Jesus Christ by being a:

- ❖ vibrant and inclusive worshipping community
- ❖ prayerful and obedient people
- ❖ congregation who take the Bible seriously as a trustworthy guide for believing and living.

We seek to share Jesus' love by:

- ❖ building loving relationships with each other and ministering to each other
- ❖ reaching out in mission to our neighbourhood and beyond
- ❖ living as a generous, welcoming community that is easy to become.

To these ends, we want every member of our covenant family to grow as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ whose life is based on the Bible, whose ambitions are centred in Christ and whose heart is passionate about people.



ORGANISATION REPORTS

Kirk Session

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom"
2 Corinthians 3:17

The Spirit of God is a Spirit of movement. He never allows us to become static, I hear some of you say. Everyday life is busy in itself, never mind our commitments and involvement within the BPC family. God never allows us or his work to become outdated, fixed or unchanging.

The Kirk Session periodically reviews the whole pattern of functions and ministry throughout our congregation. Following the Kirk Session (away day) conference in September, it was agreed that their completed strategy report, which deals with the refining and re-structuring of the current Action Teams, will be worked out through eight new teams. These eight teams will comprise members of the congregation, along with the Elders, and focus on:

1. Children
2. Youth
3. Adult
4. Seniors
5. Global Mission
6. Community
7. Ministerial
8. Support.

The role of each team will be to Know & Share Jesus endeavouring to promote prayer, outreach, discipleship, worship and care.

The nineteen presbyteries of PCI met on the first Tuesday of February to nominate the Moderator Designate for 2016 / 2017. Our Minister the Reverend

Frank Sellar received the nomination of eighteen presbyteries, quite an unprecedented result and an overwhelming endorsement by the wider church of the unique gifts, abilities, preaching and pastoral effectiveness of our beloved Pastor.

Frank who had now become Dr.Sellar was formally elected Moderator at the opening night of the General Assembly on Monday 6th June. This highest honour and calling within our denomination brought great delight throughout our congregation. The Moderators theme for his year in office will be 'a community of global concern'.

The following are some of the notable events that had happened in 2016:

- Following Frank's nomination as Moderator, The Kirk Session at their February meeting agreed unanimously to issue a call to Mr. Damien Burke, currently Assistant Minister at Hamilton Road Presbyterian Church, Bangor. The call was transmitted between East Belfast and Ards Presbyteries on Tuesday 1st March, Mr Burke accepted the call and was Ordained and Installed as Moderators Assistant Minister in BPC on Sunday evening 8th May. Damien, along with his wife Sarah and Children, Hannah, Rosin, Lydia and Stephen have been warmly welcomed and quickly settled into their new church family. Damien's Bible Teaching and ministry among us are much appreciated and uplifting.
- A service to Honour and Present New Robes to Frank was held on Sunday evening 24th April, many guests including members of Adelaide Road PC

- Dublin, community and political representatives were present.
- In conjunction with our current Building Project, a Memorandum of Understanding for our parallel overseas project was signed with Tearfund during morning worship on the 5th June. Our £60,000 three-year commitment is to establish links and financially support the work and ministry of Gilgal church which is located in Kigali, Rwanda.
 - Following discussions with the leadership of the Wednesday Club, the Kirk Session reluctantly agreed to a request from the Committee of the Wednesday Club to discontinue meeting. Appreciation was expressed to the many Ladies who had over many years led this afternoon club for senior members of the congregation and district.
 - In September, Dr Michael Long tendered his resignation as Congregational Secretary, after fourteen years' service. The Kirk Session recorded their sincere appreciation for the sterling service, loyalty and commitment which Michael had given during his tenure and for the manner and meticulousness he displayed at all times.
 - The Card Making and Crafts Class, under the direction of Rosemary Cowan stopped meeting in November. We record our thanks to Rosemary in what has been a difficult year for her.
 - Our highly respected Assistant Minister since 2013, Mr. Jeffrey Blue received a unanimous call from the congregation of Rasharkin PC to be their Minister. Jeffrey's Ordination and Installation took place in RPC on Friday 2nd December. A presentation of a financial gift was made to Jeffrey at a reception in November, we wish him God's Blessing in this new sphere of service.
- Thanks to our Ministry Team, Damien Burke, Bill Addley, Elizabeth Lewis, Brian McNarry and David Bailie for their unstinting passion and drive.
 - The following reports of the current six Action Teams are a testament and record of the excellent work and ministry which goes on throughout our church and community by so many people, fifty-two weeks a year.
- Let us then each one give ourselves afresh to God in Body, Soul and Mind, to be open to his ways and will as we seek to serve him more effectively, with Joy, Passion and greater Expectations in the coming days and months.
- Ten years ago Dr Sellar preached for the BPC vacancy. In his sermon on Sunday evening 21st January 2007 (2 Corinthians 3:17), he reminded us what a Spirit filled ministry was, he challenged us to be spiritual people, within whom God's Spirit dwells and to fully know what freedom in the spirit is ~ Bible Honouring, Christ Glorifying, Eternity Focussing.
- What about you? What about me? Are we willing to Review the Situation in our own lives, permitting the Spirit of God to take control of all things?
- "Lord, if our church is too static, may your Spirit move like wind among us, stirring and moving us into vitality and openness to your leading"*
- R. John McKibbin, Clerk of Session*
- ### **Discipleship action team**
- In light of the changes to Action Teams proposed by Kirk Session, this is mostly likely the final report from the Discipleship Action Team in its current form. This doesn't diminish the importance of discipleship within BPC or mean that it is longer valued by Kirk Session.

In fact the opposite is true as each of the new session teams will be asked to regularly consider what discipleship means within their own contexts. After all “we want every member of our covenant family to grow as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ whose life is based on the Bible, whose ambitions are centred on Christ, and whose heart is passionate about Bible” – developing disciples and building a culture of discipleship is at the core of BPC.

All who profess faith in Christ are disciples, and making disciples, as Jesus commanded in Matthew 28 is a responsibility that falls on us all. As Paul reminds us in Romans our lives are not separated into compartments - the spiritual and then everything else. He writes “so here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around-life – and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him”. In the words of the old hymn – take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to thee.

Throughout 2016 DAT sought to encourage this whole life discipleship. Before the summer, around 15 people participated in a course run by Bill Addley which focused on spiritual gifts and how those could be used both within and outside of church. In support of our couples getting married DAT facilitated a one-day pre-marriage course delivered by Christian Guidelines. We continue to pray God’s blessing on those who have already embarked on new chapter in their lives, and on those who are still planning their big day.

In November 10 BPC members attended Faith in the Family – a one day conference organised by Care for the Family which included seminars on topics like placing God at the centre of marriage; using your home as a hub of mission and serving others; it takes

a whole church to raise a child; and being family when faith is in question. Many ideas have been sparked by this day and we look forward to how they might develop in the months and years to come.

Thinking about some of the big questions that we face in life this year DAT organised a Saturday morning conference looking at mental health and mental illness from a Christian perspective. Three seminars were on offer:

1. perinatal mental health campaigner Lindsay Robinson focused on postnatal depression and the pressure that parents can face
2. child and adolescent psychiatrist Dr James Nelson looked at common mental health conditions from a biblical perspective
3. Mark Kernohan, Project Director with the Big House, highlighted the prevalence of mental illness and self-harm amongst young people. with practical advice on how to provide support and build relationships.

The morning was attended by folk from Bloomfield, other local churches. The feedback has been positive and our prayer is that those who attended will be better informed and equipped to deal with issues in their own lives, and the lives of family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues. If anyone would like more information or access to resources, please contact bpcdiscipleship@gmail.com.

Lifebuilders continued regularly on Sunday mornings after tea and coffee throughout 2016 and it has been encouraging to see so many engaging with the programme. There were three main strands with the first focusing on our church family. Through Lifebuilders we welcomed the Burke family, said farewell to Jeffrey Blue, celebrated 90 years of the 24th Boys’ Brigade, heard about the activities of

Walkway, looked back at Philip Boyd's year in Canberra and found out more about Simone Pester's forthcoming year in Nepal. The second strand provided an opportunity to be informed about key issues like the Assembly Election; homelessness in Belfast; the Syrian Refugee Crisis; the persecuted church, and the EU referendum. Thirdly, there was an opportunity to think about mission with a focus on our partnership with Gilgal Evangelical Church in Kigali; the work of Ethembeni in South Africa; and closer to home updates from Crown Jesus Ministries, Scripture Union and Storehouse. Finally, in September Rev David McIlwrath introduced Spiritual Disciplines and this theme was taken forward by Susan Giffen with a focus on prayer in November.

As this chapter of DAT closes I want to thank those that have served on the Action Team over the past few years - Philip Boyd, Jeffrey Blue, Heather McKibbin, Martin Gregg, David Thompson, Kirk Shilliday, Drew Gibson, Alistair Greer and Sandra Martin (not forgetting Trevor Lee and Bill Addley) for their wisdom, insight, contribution and encouragement. I also want to thank the people behind the scenes who ensure that everything happens when it should- the sound and AV team for their help with Lifebuilders and the Faith & Mental Health morning; Jenny McNarry for providing advice & assistance on finance; and to Dorothy and the ladies in the office for their patience.

Karen Jardine, Convenor

Evangelism action team

For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "*I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.*"

To share our faith with others is an important part of every Church and every Christian's life, and here are

some of the things BPC has been doing over the past year to share the hope we have in Jesus:

Mandy Lee and her dedicated team faithfully continue to run the 'Sundays at Walkway' children's outreach at the Walkway Centre on Fivoy Street. It's great to see the trust they have built with the children and their parents and whilst it is hard work, this outreach together with the homework club and the walkway summer scheme involvement has built good links with this part of our local community. The folks at the community centre have been most welcoming and helpful to the team, and it was great to finish the year with a carol service at the centre.

Under the banner *Men in Bloomfield*, Stephen McDonald continued to run events aimed at building bridges with men on the fringes of the congregation and as a way to invite non-believers to hear about the love of Jesus. Ably assisted by chief chef, Neil Groom, a number of 'chilli nights' have been run which have provided 'food for thought' on what life is about. These have been thought provoking and friendship enhancing events. A big thanks is extended to Stephen for leading this work over the past 3 years. He hands over the reins to Andy Bell for 2017, who will appreciate our encouragement, prayers and support.

Matthew's gospel tells us... "Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." As we have moved into 2017, let us encourage one another to focus on shining the light of Christ into the homes, neighbourhoods and communities where we live.

Andrew Shott, Convenor

Fellowship action team

An increasing trend within the life of the congregation has been to move from organised social events towards opportunities for more informal fellowship. A wealth of such opportunities exist ranging from bowls for both gents and ladies, the monthly walking group and the soup club and also meetings for mums and tots and dads and tots. Adult organisations and groups like Charis are also places of fellowship and opportunities have been afforded to bring the New Year in as a church family and for seniors to meet together for outings over the summer. It has been our aim as a Team to offer support and encouragement to those involved in delivering these.

The Home Groups are at the heart of our getting to know one another better and helping us to feel part of a large diverse group of people. We are indebted once again to those who coordinate these and we are delighted that throughout the year there has been a steady stream of folk joining. There is always room for more however. The study material on First Corinthians and Exodus has enabled us to look at faith not just in terms of belief but also practical outworking.

The ladies weekend is always eagerly anticipated but we are still coming to terms with the accident and the death of Maureen Buchanan. We are however grateful for the experience of God's provision in all that has happened. There have been difficult times for many in the congregation and our pastoral care of one another is paramount in sharing Christ's love. We need to continue to strive to bear one another's burdens.

Ruth Moore and Jill Simpson stepped down from the Team in the course of the year and we wish to thank them for their contribution. Our thanks also go to Pamela Corrie who has until recently coordinated our meals ministry which is greatly appreciated by those

who receive them. Also appreciated is the confidential prayer ministry offered after each service and the monthly prayer diary prepared by Sharon Groves and the church office.

Although there is plenty going on fellowship wise in Bloomfield, we should never become complacent. A recent survey showed that loneliness is one of the biggest problems in our society but hopefully we can become a better caring community embracing of all.

Geoff Gordon and Susan Giffen

Mission action team

The Mission Action Team continues to stimulate missionary interest within the congregation, and to support serving missionaries, promote summer teams and assist students for ministry.

Serving Missionaries' Comings and Goings. We take a special interest in members of the congregation, and some others, who are serving at home and overseas. We support them financially, distributing their prayer literature, and by regular contact.

Helen Lyttle returned to Japan in September 2016 after a year with us on home assignment. She has resumed her demanding but rewarding work with OMF, supporting missionary families and children, and playing an active part in her local congregation, the Lighthouse Church in Sapporo. In what may be her penultimate term and after decades of service, many of her contemporaries have now retired and she is now finding that her 'senior status' is presenting different challenges.

Amanda Christie on medical advice has not been able to return to Nepal. She is living in Scotland and seeking new opportunities for employment.

James and Heather Cochrane continue church planting in Porto, Portugal. They are actively seeking a native Portuguese believer to assist them in this task and, at time of writing, may well have found a suitable person. They seek prayer for themselves and their work and for their daughters Alana and Lucy. Their girls now in their teens have no Christian young people available for friendship.

Russell Bowers continues to be associated with Christians in Sport and under its auspices is developing his work.

Chris Simons is drawing towards the end of his time in student work in the Midlands. He plans to work as a church planter and would value prayer support.

Brian Simons, and Eddie Spence both continue working in the Titanic Quarter, and the Ballygomartin (respectively), supported through our United Appeal contributions, as is Rebekah McDonald, community worker with Fortwilliam and Macrory Presbyterian Churches.

Robert Bailie very effectively continues his work as Family Worker in Dundonald Presbyterian Church, supported by that congregation.

During the year we were able to support financially Emma Keown, the wife of Caleb. She is a member of an Agape team working among students at Queen's University.

An unfortunate consequence of Brexit has been the fall in the value of the pound sterling against the dollar and euro. As a result we have increased our financial support to Helen to make up the shortfall. We have also been able to make smaller increases to others.

Students for Ministry. Alan Dickey continues as the licentiate assistant in Knock Presbyterian Church.

Philip Boyd returned from Australia in March 2016. He has renewed his application for the Ministry of the Presbyterian Church.

Summer Outreach Teams. Following our normal practice, we supported several of our young people on Summer outreach teams during July and August.

Moldova. The visit of Pastor Cornel with his wife Leila in April 2016 proved very valuable in deepening the ties between Bloomfield congregation and Golgotha Church in Chisinau. John McKibbin and Andrew Shott followed this up with a visit to Golgotha in November. As a result we have been invited to send a small team to assist with village evangelism in July 2017. We hope to respond positively. We are also seeking to develop our links with Dr Mihail Malancea and Chisinau Bible School.

Bill Addley, Convenor

Worship action team

The Gospel Coalition website recently posted an article entitled, 'Five Ways to Improve Congregational Singing'. If you get an opportunity to read this article, it is well worth ten minutes of your time. <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/tgcworship/2014/02/18/five-ways-to-improve-congregational-singing/>

The article stressed the importance of congregational singing and highlighted some practical advice for strengthening and improving congregational singing. Here are some quotes from the article:

'...it's vital to build a culture where everyone realizes our corporate responsibility before God and to each other is to sing together. Many of our common challenges can be corrected when we teach and encourage those involved in our music to be excited about using their many rich and

colourful gifts for the purpose of supporting the congregation. Every singer, instrumentalist, and choir member should share in facilitating the high calling of congregational singing.'

At Bloomfield, we are truly blessed with the many rich and colourful gifts we have when it comes to music and supporting the congregational singing particularly at our Sunday Services.

We give thanks to God for all the hours, time and effort that Brian McNarry puts in as our musical coordinator in order to serve us as a church family. We are thankful to the many musicians and singers as they serve and contribute to our congregational singing. We are indebted and appreciate Mark Keown, Mark Mason, Ian Simons, Karen Jardine, Andrea Harbinson and Karl Malcolm in how they 'share in facilitating the high calling of congregational singing' at both regular and special evening services. We want to acknowledge the dedication of those at the sound desk, those who do easy worship (even when it is not so easy) and the AV team who prepare slides for each service and record them for the church website.

In addition to the regular services, we are thankful for the generous good will and commitment of many others to events such as the Christmas Carols by Candlelight, Walkway Community Service, quarterly services in The Arches and weddings and funerals.

Please continue to pray on for all who serve under the auspice of the Worship Action Team. Pray that the abundance of gifts and talents will support and facilitate our congregational singing to the praise and glory of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Rev Damien Burke

Youth action team

Last year's Youth Action Team report gave an insight into the appointment of our Youth Worker, Reuben Johnston, and his good start in Merge and in linking with the uniformed organisations. The great news is that, through God's grace, Reuben has been able to build on that good start and we're beginning to see real fruit from his ministry in Bloomfield.

Reuben was appointed from outside the congregation, so he was able to consider Merge objectively and identify what worked well and what could work better. Having discussed with the leaders and the parents significant changes, a new version of Merge was established from the beginning of January 2016. Moving from Saturday to Friday evening has been a great success in terms of numbers, with regular turn-outs of between 40 and 50 young people. It is very encouraging that a healthy and increasing proportion come from outside the church. Equally, the new format has been welcomed by most of the young people. However, in response to those who would like more time to reflect on the evening's theme, 'Merge Extend' follows the teaching and gives an opportunity to ask questions, discuss and go deeper – Lifebuilders for teens! More detail on Merge will appear in a separate report.

The youth club formerly known as K4C has been re-branded as Sub-Merge to reinforce the link between this group and the teenagers. This transition is definitely an area for both sets of leaders to develop further so that there is a smooth passage from one age group to the next. While James Gordon and his great team of enthusiastic volunteers continue to deliver a programme of games, sports, outings and craft, the focus of every evening is on Centre Spot. This is when one of the leaders, or a visitor, takes a short time to

share with the children an aspect of the Gospel. As in all aspects of church life, change is inevitable. James Gordon has announced his ‘retirement’ from leadership at the end of this church year, giving plenty of notice and time for succession planning. All who work with James have experienced at first hand his heart for God’s kingdom and his love of people. His work with K4C/Sub-Merge is greatly appreciated!

Under the leadership of James Cousley and his four teams, Kidzone continues to provide our children with innovative, creative programmes of Bible teaching, worship, drama, games, craft and an outlet for their energies. Once again, a more detailed report on Kidzone follows this overview.

Reuben’s work with the Boys’ Brigade in particular has enabled him to build strong relationships with the boys and support the officers in their task of promoting Christ’s kingdom. A more detailed report on the BB can be found elsewhere in the Year Book.

Like the BB, the Rainbows, Brownies and Guides bring in many children and young people who belong to this congregation, other congregations, or to no church. The leaders continue to plan for and deliver programmes that draw these young people in; their faithful dedication provides a Christian influence and opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

We are continually grateful to God for His blessings on every aspect of our work with young people and for those who serve in all the organisations mentioned above. Nevertheless, we realise that leaders have been in short supply in some of our groups and, as in every church, new volunteers committed to sharing the Gospel with children and young people are always welcome! If you feel that you would like to be involved in one of these groups, simply have a chat with one of the leaders.

We would like to thank the members of the Youth Action Team for their continued support. At the most recent meeting we all recognised the need to review the make-up of the team, but deferred any action until the Kirk Session’s review of the action team structure is completed.

Finally, we would like to thank Jeffrey Blue for his huge contribution to Merge and the BB, as well as his commitment to building relationships with children and young people. We miss him and wish him God’s richest blessing as minister in Rasharkin.

Malcolm McClure and Mark Keown

Parallel project of the building fund

In 2015 Bloomfield Presbyterian Church (BPC) began exploring a partnership with Tearfund through Connected Church which led to a visit by four members of BPC to Tearfund Rwanda in October. Following the visit, which included meeting three of Tearfund’s partner churches across Rwanda, the group made a recommendation to the session and congregation of Bloomfield to participate in the Connected Church programme, and link with Gilgal Evangelical Church in Gatare Village, Kigali.

The session and congregation of Bloomfield agreed to send out a group of 7 members in October 2016 to meet with the linked church, deliver training on church leadership; and share fellowship. The seven team members were John Armstrong, Michael Cooper, Brian Corrie, Rachel Craig, Karen Jardine, Reuben Johnston, Graham Simpson.

The visit (27 Oct - 4 Nov 2016) had three components (1) participating in community work, (2) fellowship with Gilgal, and (3) fact-finding about Gilgal’s ministries and projects. Michael Cooper made a photographic record

of the week's activities, and provided training to Tearfund partners on using photography as part their field work and data collection.

Community work. On their first day with Gilgal the Bloomfield team participated in Umuganda, official supervised community work which takes place for 3 hours on the last Saturday of each month. Working alongside the local community, which included members of Gilgal church, the team helped to clear land, move rocks and cement. On their final day, the team again worked alongside Gilgal church members to help paint the church and plaster the walls of the Sunday School classrooms. This helped the team to begin to understand the Rwandan way of doing things.

Fellowship with Gilgal. Saturday afternoon was the first opportunity for the team and the leaders from Gilgal Evangelical Church to start to get to know each other. Each church shared its vision and values, and spoke of its various ministries. The team then divided into two groups with one group remaining with the church leadership to discuss administration and leadership, and the second meeting with those involved in youth ministry.

On Sunday morning the Bloomfield team were formally introduced to, and received by, Gilgal church. The team shared greetings from Rev Dr Bill Addley and presented cards which had been made by Kidzone and the Anchor Boys. Reuben, Rachel and Brian spent time with the Sunday School teaching the lesson and sharing some songs. Those that remained in the service heard Peninah preach from 1 Corinthians 12 – we are all different parts of the same body – which was particularly apt as we begin on this partnership.

Fact-finding. Over Monday and Tuesday the team met some of Gilgal's self-help ministry groups, some of which are supported through Tearfund partner AESD.

These included the widows group, 'Dorcas'; the 'Unified People' group which is made up of street vendors seeking to find a more permanent place for business; and the HIV group called 'Beloved Ones'. The team also met small business owners who are supported through micro-finance; people who had accessed health insurance through contributions from the church, and the local community leaders. Members of each group were eager to share stories of how the support they received was helping them to develop their skills, raise small amounts of income, and share ideas and resources. There was a consistent message of hope, reliance on God through prayer, and a sense of the benefits that come from working together. The groups also asked questions of the team, and when appropriate prayers and praise were also shared.

Support from Tearfund. Tearfund supported the group from Bloomfield in several very practical ways including travel arrangements and transport in Kigali, developing the programme, support and translation services, and facilitating their thinking about the future of the partnership with Gilgal, and involvement in Connected Church.

Next Steps. The first payment of £20.000 has been paid to Tearfund, and 30% of this has been allocated to Gilgal through the Connected Church Programme. Tearfund retains 10% for administration costs and the rest of the money is distributed around other Connected Church projects across Rwanda.

The team from Bloomfield have come away with many ideas as to how the partnership with Gilgal can progress over the next three years. We were delighted to welcome Peninah to an evening service at the end of November and look forward to Neil McDougall having an opportunity to meet with representatives of

Gilgal Evangelical Church in early 2017 while he takes part in the Tearfund Cycle of Hope.

As the partnership develops you can follow progress on the blog at www.bpcrwanda.weebly.com.

Congregational committee

2016 was another busy year in the life of the Congregational Committee.

As in recent years, much of the business of the Committee was taken up with discussion and debate around the redevelopment of the church halls. As at December 2016, the formal planning process had been under way for almost eighteen months with much work being undertaken behind the scenes. Significantly the Planning Authority, and the Historic Building Unit have, in the course of the year, approved the plans albeit we still have one final hurdle to overcome in securing the approval of the Conservation Architect.

Matters were also complicated to some extent as a consequence of the Listing of the main church building, gates and railings on 24th March 2016 with all of the implications that might have in terms of the scope and cost of the works.

In the course of the year, the Committee has had to consider and debate a number of interim measures to facilitate the use of the halls and how best to utilise the resources we have to ensure that we are not unnecessarily incurring expenditure on items and repairs which will have only a limited period of use prior to the building work commencing.

It has been encouraging to see how the building fund has grown rapidly in size with a balance of almost £800,000 at the end of 2016, an incredible testimony to the generosity and vision of the congregation as a

whole. On behalf of the Committee I would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to those who have faithfully contributed to the fund by way of bequests, donations and regular giving and for the sacrifices so many have made in terms of time and resources in arranging and supporting various fund-raising events.

There were many other items which required the attention of the Congregational Committee during the year including the sanctioning and purchase of a new minibus which has been put to great use, the repainting of the church railings and the redecoration of the Frackleton Hall. The Committee has also latterly committed to the purchase and installation of a defibrillator on church premises under the expert guidance and counsel of Dr Mark Harbinson.

Due to heightened concerns about security in and around the church buildings on week day evenings particularly when the youth and uniformed organisations are meeting, a new security rota has been devised and implemented with individual committee members teaming up with an elder and providing on site security every Monday and Tuesday night. The leaders of the uniformed organisations have indicated that they greatly appreciate the work of the Committee and Elders in committing to provide this additional support as we seek together to safeguard the church buildings and all those who make use of them in the course of the working week.

BPC attained charitable status in April 2016 with the requirement to implement various changes to ensure compliance with our statutory obligations as a charity. This has been a particular challenge for our Treasurer, Jenny McNarry, who deserves a special word of thanks for all of the additional work she has undertaken to ensure we are fully compliant with Charities legislation.

2016 was a year of firsts, with the Committee welcoming the Rev. Damien Burke to what was his very first Congregational Committee meeting, an experience he will no doubt remember for some time! Dr Bill Addley was also required to act as interim chair for one of our meetings whilst our esteemed Chairman, Tom Reid, underwent major surgery. I think it is correct to say that Bill was very pleased to see Tom sufficiently well recovered to return to the Chair for the next meeting!

We were however very sad to see Michael Long step down from the role of Honorary Secretary, a position in which he has loyally and ably served for fourteen years. We are deeply indebted to Michael for his outstanding contribution to the work and life of the Congregational Committee over the years and I would also like to extend my personal thanks for the assistance he has provided to me as I begin to fill a very large pair of shoes!

We were pleased to see Brian Corrie appointed to the role of Convener of the Property Sub Committee. We would like to extend our thanks to Dr Adrian Long for his many years of service in this role and wish Brian every blessing particularly as he seeks to recruit new members to the Sub Committee in the coming year.

We would also like to thank Dorothy Wright, Elaine Long and Frances Gribben for the fantastic work they do behind the scenes as volunteers in the Church Office, David Bailie for diligently keeping the sanctuary and halls clean and tidy despite the volume of activities that take place on church premises on a daily basis and all of those individuals who give up their free time to serve on the various sub-committees. Everyone's contribution is greatly appreciated.

We hope that 2017 will finally see the granting of full planning permission and that the long anticipated

redevelopment of the halls will get under way. That of itself will no doubt bring fresh challenges for the Committee but we continue to feel greatly blessed and privileged as we seek together to make decisions which will advance the Kingdom and the life and witness of BPC.

Kenny Chambers, Honorary Secretary



In 1926 a number of influential members of the Church Session along with the Rev Campbell Young considered starting a Boys Brigade Company in Bloomfield. Some 90 years later we launched a year of celebration at Enrolment in October 2016 with plans to conclude at Enrolment in October 2017 to coincide with the actual commencement of 'The 24TH'.

It is with a sense of thankfulness and blessing that we look back over those years firstly to our Great Captain – Jesus Christ – and to the men and women who offered themselves in service to Him in the advancement of His Kingdom. We also give thanks for the boys and young men who passed through the ranks and are now taking their place in society both here and across the seas as well as those who have passed to glory.

We are very aware of the legacy we have inherited over the 90 years and the staff and boys of this era continue to pursue the original values of 'obedience reverence, self-respect and all that tends towards a

true Christian manliness’ albeit in a very contemporary context.

I want to use this report to express our thanks to our parents and to the whole church family for their support, for their practical help and for their prayers. Without which we would not continue to flourish. Those occasions on which we gather as one company at Enrolment, Carols & Mince Pies, Display and the Family Bar B Q are very special to us. It is a delight to build friendships and make new ones, many of which are with folks who do not belong to Bloomfield, but who have the trust and confidence in us to be part of their boy’s development.

To those who provide their services on Security or with the HEBREWS rota we simply say a sincere thanks for all your support. To those who pray for us and support us, many of whom have done so for decades – we really appreciate all your love and concern as we know we cannot do this work without the Lord’s blessing and presence.

Looking back we can see His Blessings – looking forward - we can do no better than to seek His Guidance and His Will as we seek to ‘Advance His Kingdom amongst Boys’.

24 BB Anchor Boys

A strange question perhaps as the 24th celebrates its 90th session and has been around so long that surely everyone knows what happens every Monday night ... but do you?

Look into the Megaw Hall any Monday night and you will see 20+ red jumpers flying around the hall chasing each other, gathering in groups to make their craft, sitting intently listening to a Bible story, looking out for those less fortunate when they respond to the

Storehouse appeal at Harvest.....new friendships being formed – some of which will last for life. It is a hive of noise and busyness – the buzz of Christ’s kingdom being advanced.

I wonder how many faces you would recognise from Sunday morning. Probably no more than half of them because a Monday night is when the halls are filled with boys not only from our own congregation but from the local community. New families to talk to, new families to reach out to and new families who we hope will want to become part of God’s family.

BB research tell us two things about the BB and the church. Firstly, if you want teenagers in the church then you need to start with the 5 year olds. We know that most of our Anchor Boys come along because their parents send them. That means 2 things – it means that we need to promote ourselves in a way which is attractive to parents so that they want to send their boys along. It also means though that we need to have a programme that the boys enjoy so much that when the time comes that they make their own decisions, they then choose to come.

The second thing is that if the kids want to come, the parents may follow. So when they do follow, and they do come to our inspection, the enrolment service, the youth parade, we need the parents to leave here with a desire to return. At least 50% of our members are not connected to this church. That means that every week, our local community are engaging with us.

We want all our boys and their families to feel as if they are part of the family of Bloomfield so supporting things like the harvest collection for Storehouse and telling them about our project in Rwanda are simple ways to try to build that relationship. Karen Jardine came along one evening to receive a card that the boys made for our partner church in Rwanda and

following the delivery of the card, Karen returned along with Michael Cooper to visit Anchor Boys and bring them a message from the children in Rwanda. We also brought the boys into our Bloomfield family when we held our enrolment service in October and our annual display and end of session BBQs are very much family events that bring together the youngest Anchor Boys and the oldest Officer. Of course, Christmas now starts with our annual parent's event which saw the Frackleton Hall, once again packed.

Over the last year we have been using our Facebook page (24th Boys Brigade Belfast) to post photos of our activities so parents know exactly what we have been doing as we appreciate sometimes the stories parents hear may not always be as accurate a version as we would like.....in the same way as we are sure all the stories we hear about home aren't quite the accurate version either! Take a look at our page and you will see that we have had cinema nights, made buns, welcomed back old boys like Euan McKibbin who took a night of sport, played lots of games, launched gliders from the balcony of the church, searched for Crème Eggs, read lots of Bible stories and had a visit from Helen to learn about Japan ... to name just a few! For the first time this year, a team of Anchor Boys participated in the Belfast Battalion potted sports competition and they had a great morning, participating in 10 different activities against 10 other companies, picking up lots of points along the way.

Our programme is focussed on 5 key area – community, body, mind, creativity and spirit. However, through all we do the object of the BB remains at the very centre of what we do. In the society we live in, the promotion of habits of obedience, reverence, discipline, self-respect and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness are often lacking so the responsibility of encouraging these habits is not

something we take lightly. Ultimately we hope that all our activities point the boys to Christ. Lying on the floor helping stick scrunched up tissue paper on to a page in the hope that it sticks long enough for it to make it home, may not seem like evangelism but giving each boy just a few minutes of our time to chat to them and take an interest in them may plant a seed and make a lasting impact. What a privilege!

All of what we do is dependent on the help and support of a key team of people. First, many thanks to Stephen McDonald and his team of Hebrews volunteers. We really appreciate that we can offer tea and coffee to our parents as they wait to do the pick-up and who knows what conversations and relationships are being built during this time. Thank you also to all the Anchor Boy staff.

The staff team changed during 2016 and it would be remiss if I did not pay tribute to the work carried out in Anchor Boys by Jeffrey Blue on behalf of the Captain and the entire leadership team. Jeff joined the team for 2 weeks in September 2014 and only left when it was decided that the commute from Rasharkin would be too much! The support, time and effort that he put into the Anchor Boys was immense and while we are delighted that God has called him so clearly to Rasharkin we do miss him a lot! Often as leaders, we under estimate the impact we may be making but Jeff's impact on the boys is undoubtedly lasting with one boy sobbing when he got home, eventually telling his mum he was just so sad that Jeff had left. Such was Jeff's contribution to Anchor Boys we have had to replace him with 2 people!

We are delighted that David Bell and Errol Martin have joined our team and to them, along with Gayle Logan, Joanne Gordon and Felicity Orr as well as Company Section boys Donovan Draper and Matthew Holmes, I

say a very big thank you for all that they do each week. I am grateful to have such a great team of people who are committed to our work and so faithfully give of their time.

This report started with the question, “what’s it all about?” I hope this gives you a taste of what we do and why we do it. Why not come and see for yourself some time? We love to have people along to share their skills and interests with us so please get in touch if you would be willing to help us as we strive to advance Christ’s kingdom among boys.

Karen Reid, OIC Anchor Boys

24 BB Junior Section

2016 has been another good year for the Junior Section. We had 21 boys who come regularly on a Monday evening and with more than half the boys not being connected to our church it is great to feel we also have engagement with our local community. Being part of the wider family of the 24th is important to us and our desire is to play our part in the life of Bloomfield as we reach out to advance His Kingdom.

We continue to deliver our programme to help boys achieve badges in five areas; body, mind, spirit, community and creativity. The programme provides challenges, adventure and opportunities to learn and grow. The fun and engaging programme enables the boys to work in a team and take more responsibility. It is always a source of joy to the leaders to see how what we do will help boys build new skills and their characters developing from year to year. It is particularly encouraging to see boys and families who are now part of the Company Section.

In addition to our normal meeting night activities we had a variety of additional events.

- Ten-Pin Bowling outing
- Visit by Joe Loughlin “The Gathering Drum” who gave the boys instruction in the art of drumming
- Visit by Pamela a colleague of Anna’s who came along to do a stop start animation night where the boys made short films which we were able to watch at the end of the night – great imaginations!
- Belfast Battalion Junior Section Belfast Battalion Divis and Black Mountain ramble. 9 boys enjoyed a picnic and afternoon of hiking with other Junior Section boys - we had great weather and the views from the top of the mountain were amazing.

We have also had great support from church members with Stephen McDonald coming down to do a bible time with the boys, Euan McKibbin taking a sports evening, Jill Simpson coming to share with us and the Anchor Boys all about storehouse and James McClure taking a Japan themed evening for us. Their time and involvement is much appreciated.

Thanks to the boys for participating so enthusiastically in all we do and to the parents who take the time to not only bring them along every Monday evening but to also bring them to the various events.

Thank you also to the Junior Section staff Gavin Dunn, Anna Simpson (congratulations on the birth of her daughter Eva), Gareth McKibbin and Brian Gaffney. This year we also had the welcome addition of Philip Boyd back from his antipodean adventures.

We thank you all for your continued support and prayers as we our work with the boys endeavouring to advance Christ’s Kingdom among the boys.

Nicola Elwood, OIC Junior Section

24th Company Section

The Company Section has been blessed with a great group of boys who have been very faithful and willing to get involved in a wide range of activities. Our programme allows us to be flexible yet ensure we cover all of the key activities in Community, Recreation and Skills underpinned with an emphasis on Christian Faith. It was particularly pleasing to see 5 boys come forward to receive their Presidents Badge with some 4 currently pursuing the Queens Badge which we hope will be awarded in our 90th year celebrations.

Our commitment to Tear Fund saw us raise over £3500 which will go to the Kigali Project whilst we continue to support young people's work with a monthly contribution. Fun activities have included trips to the cinema and Laser Quest as well as a trip to Sunderland to see them beat Man U 2-1. I think we all agree that being out on top of the Holywood Hills in a torrential rainstorm as part of the 'moonwalk' is not where we wanted to be, no matter how good the burgers were. We have a number of boys participating in Battalion Football Teams and we continue to see success in the Cross Country with Andrew Hagan in particular.

I'm glad to report that the spirit of belonging is a source of affirmation as we meet week by week. Overall the level of attendance is high though we have to make allowances for school pressures and exams at different stages as each school has its own agenda. That said, at a recent staff meeting the leadership team were able to look back over the year with a strong sense that our relationships with boys and families have continued to grow. In every way we seek 'to know Jesus and show His love' to the whole family of 'The 24th' as part of the wider mission in Bloomfield.

It is important that I acknowledge the work of the leadership team in Company Section as we work with boys each week – Alan McClurg, Alan Galbraith, Mark Boyd, Stephen Simpson, Andy Loughran and Brett Hillis. Our appreciation to Ruben Johnson as he gets fully involved as part of the team on a weekly basis and for taking on responsibility for our Christian Faith studies.

We end the year with anticipation that this 90th Year will be a special time for all of us.

Billy Manson, Captain

24th Old Boys and former members - pre-notice

As we look forward can I ask that you will inform all former members that we intend to celebrate this special year and to help us get up to date contact details so that we can provide information and invitations to various events. Please contact me in the first instance.

Badminton club

The badminton Club continues to meet on Friday nights in the Frackleton Hall at 7.45pm. We have an encouraging number playing every week covering all abilities.

Last year we had our annual outing to Stinsons at Scarva which was very much enjoyed by all.

We welcome everyone from age 16 and upwards. Standard of play is not important, so whether you are a beginner or someone who hasn't played for a while, why not join us to burn off a few calories. You will be guaranteed a warm welcome.

Dawn Simons, Secretary

Bloomfield mens bowling club

2016 has been a most enjoyable and successful year for the men's bowling club. Each Thursday evening from 7.00 to 9.30pm an average of about 18 men compete against each other in bowling activities. We have a membership of 34 members and would welcome more men from the church to join us for an evening of sport and entertainment.

In January The Park Avenue Hotel was able to provide 26 steaks for a movie/meal deal at a superb meal before the film "Revenant" at The Strand Arts Centre. During February and March various competitions and tournaments were held and the following people obtained trophies:

- Dr Orr Cup won by Euan McKibbin
- Hugh McRoberts Trophy won by Gordon Bowers
- Eric Vint Memorial Trophy won by Stanley Cobain
- Samuel Woods Trophy won by James Harris.

Many thanks and congratulations to all who took part in the events.

In March Mr Bert Young on his 90th birthday was invited to become the President of the club in recognition of his service and dedication to bowling at Bloomfield Presbyterian Church.

Other members elected to office were Ken Munn (Chairman), Stanley Cobain (Treasurer) and George McCambley (Secretary). Members of committee were John Corry, John Maxwell and Cecil Carson.

In June 18 members made an expedition by train to Coleraine and then by rambler bus to the Giants causeway. This was followed by a good meal at the Causeway hotel. A great day out.

An additional roller/trolley for the bowling mats was purchased and then modified by John Corry. This has been of great benefit as it removes the problem of lifting heavy mats

The grant obtained from Belfast City Council has helped in our outreach work to attract more men from the community to our activities

Sadly in November one of our oldest members Bobby Coulter passed away at the age of 91. His amazing personality and presence is missed by all.

The year finished with a "Goliath Fry" for everyone at the Skainos Centre

In conclusion please note that the club is for men of all ages and abilities and everyone will be made very welcome on any Thursday for a bowling session followed by a short epilogue and refreshments. All equipment provided.

George McCambley, Secretary

Bloomfield ladies bowling club

Our Bowling club is now well established and we are very encouraged that several ladies, who don't belong to our church, have come along to join us, through chance encounters with one or two of our members, or through conversations they have had with their friends who are already members. It's lovely to get to know new ladies and we all enjoy great fun and fellowship together on Thursday mornings.

We held our usual competitions throughout the year. At Halloween our Target Bowls was won by Etta McCoy, with runners-up Margaret Hughes and Roberta McCracken. In March our Target Bowls was won by Etta McCoy, with runners-up Margaret Ball and Elaine

Long. We run a pairs competition from January to May, which was won by Renee Irons and Margaret Hughes, with runners-up Ruth Addley and Jean McCambley.

Throughout the year the scores for the first game of the morning are recorded and added up. At the end of the season the member with the highest score is awarded our Rinks Trophy. This year it was won by Margaret Hughes, with runner up Roberta McCracken and in third place Evelyn Elwood. Congratulations to all those ladies.

We like to organise several social events throughout the year. In November we enjoyed a night at the Grand Opera House to see A White Christmas. Dublin was our venue for our two-day trip in April, this included an evening at the Bord Gais theatre watching 'Annie', a really great show. After the end of our bowling season we enjoyed a day out in Londonderry, followed by a lovely meal in the Beech Hill House Hotel.

This season our members have had to deal with many difficult situations – illnesses, injuries and loss, but by God's grace we have come through all of them, helped by the care members have shown for each other.

Every week this season again, Maureen has successfully run a book stall and sales table, with all proceeds going to the church building fund, and Eleanor has continued to run the Avon agency, with all proceeds again going to the building fund. Both these ladies are to be commended for all their hard work and we give thanks for the wonderful effort they have made, supported by our very generous members, for our new halls.

We are indebted to the members of the men's bowling club who put the mats down for us each week and make sure we have everything we need.

Pat Patterson, Secretary

Charis

"To me, Charis is a piece of heaven. A place where everyone is accepted and cared for, without having to worry about being judged or criticised. A place where there is an atmosphere of love and care and where I find refuge from the challenges and concerns of the outside world." (Charis parent)

Charis is a place with a unique family vibe where we share fun Saturday afternoons with families affected by developmental and intellectual disabilities. In celebrating community together we have discovered that disability ministry isn't about programs, outreaches and events. It's about spending time with each other, valuing everyone and sharing God's love and hope. Acceptance and belonging through rain and shine. At Charis we firmly believe that God made us all wonderfully, those with disabilities simply show us God's wonder in different ways that we would otherwise miss.

Charis starts at 1.45pm for the under 16's. We have several new families in this group. Every child has a 1 to 1 buddy. They enjoy our soft play area, ball pool, tunnels and rockers as well as relaxing in our peaceful sensory room. Crafts, snack time and birthday cake usually finish the first half of our afternoon.

The over 16s then arrive for 3.30 pm and finish at 5 pm. The young people help to prepare snacks and then we have a bit of craic as we eat, catching up round the table. Parents and helpers join in with a mixture of indoor games, crafts and outdoor walks. Favourites include curling, cookery, parachute games and music. We even had our own "Olympics" in the summer term and constructed a working lighthouse!

One of our volunteers shared recently, "I come to Charis because of the happy faces and the love each

one gives, it's contagious. Each child touches my heart in their unique way. They are like magnets that draw you back. I come to give, but go home with so much more. God blesses me every time. It's so encouraging."

Memorable days this year include our visit to The Donkey Sanctuary in August, our family barbecue in June and bowling at Dundonald Ice Bowl. The Christmas party was fun-filled with our older group creating penguins with "Jumping Clay" and Mickey, Minnie and Santa entertaining us all..

We are discovering and exploring how to share a tactile gospel – one that employs an array of senses – touch, smell, sound and a sensory atmosphere. We pray that our friends learn of grace, mercy, gentleness, acceptance and salvation by how they experience us in relationship with them as community.

Currently we have over 30 children/young people. As we grow and expand we are looking for more volunteers in three key areas. Do you enjoy playing with children, helping with snacks or sharing an interest you love with others? If so please speak to me or any of our committee: Deirdre Bowden, Geoff Gordon, Mandy Lee, Jenny McNarry, Joyce Manson

Karen Hamilton, Charis Leader

Crèche

Crèche Register. Crèche offers childcare for the babies and toddlers (under 3's) of our congregation during the Sunday church service and Life builders. Facilities operate from 10:55am until 1pm. Crèche leaders and volunteers begin the set -up of crèche from 10:30-10:45am. There are approximately 20 babies and toddlers who regularly attend and who are on the crèche register. Numbers vary week to week.

We are also pleased to the care for the small children of visitors to the Sunday morning service. All are cared for by a team of volunteers headed by one of our crèche leaders. The children have a range of toys and equipment to entertain them and have a small snack during the period that they are at crèche.

When our babies and toddlers are 3+ they can progress to Kidzone 'Blue Group'.

Staffing. We have a dedicated team of eight crèche leaders who setup, organise and facilitate crèche on a weekly basis, assisted by a list of approximately 45+ volunteers. We thank them all for their dedication, enthusiasm and support. Each year we must say a sad farewell to some long serving volunteers - some moving on to pastures new and others who are diverting their attentions to serve the Lord in other ways. We are ever mindful of the child protection ratios for proper supervision of our young babies and children and are always keen to secure additional volunteers. It is a great privilege to spend time with the little children of our congregation and to afford their parents the opportunity to attend a full church service. Anyone who is willing to join our rota should speak to one of the crèche leaders.

Going Forward. We continue with our new text reminder service for volunteers has been and are distributing our rota by email. This greatly assists the administration of crèche and is better for the environment. We have bought some new toys this year which the children have really enjoyed.

The Crèche Leadership Team: Catherine, Rhonda, Kerry, Alison, Ruth K, Susan, Angela and Ruth H.

Matthew 18 v5 'And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.'

Catherine Chambers

Dads and toddlers group

The dads and toddlers group continues to meet between 10.00 and 11.30am on the second Saturday of each month. We have been deeply encouraged by the continual arrival of dads who attend the group from outside of Bloomfield Presbyterian Church.

With the kids having fun in the main hall with dressing up, slides, sand pit, scooters and bikes, the dads have an opportunity to retire to the lounge area and sample the culinary delights of a hot breakfast, washed down with tea or coffee. The kids are not forgotten and are also treated to toast, sausages, fruit and juice.

This year I decided to step aside from the group having come on board in 2009, following on from John Elwood. Our new leader is Gordon Kerr, who we wish very success too and has taken on the new challenge with great enthusiasm. I shall remain in a secretarial role looking after the administration side of the group

Once again, a big thank you to Billy Manson, Stephen MacDonald, John Elwood, Richard Irons and Drew Gibson for their unfailing, regular help each month. Most importantly, a big thank-you to all the dads, who support us regularly on these Saturday mornings.

The December meeting was once again especially memorable for the kids as once again a passing visit was made by Santa Clause distributing gifts and obtaining final updates on Christmas 'wish' lists. The dads also enjoyed a special sit down Christmas Ulster fry courtesy of our in house executive chef.

We look forward to 2017 with optimism and we continue to encourage and welcome any new dads with children from new born to P1 age to join us on our Saturday morning for some craic and good food.

Vernon Taylor, Co-ordinator



Girlguiding Ulster
girls in the lead

Rainbow Guides

2016 has been another encouraging and fun filled year for the Rainbow Guides. Joining us each Tuesday night we have continued to have high attendance from 25 enthusiastic and energetic girls.

Rainbows promises to challenge and develop girls aged 4-7 and this year we have explored our Rainbows jigsaw (look, learn, laugh and love) by going on a Global adventure and doing our Roundabout seasons badges. Along with our usual regular activities such as singing, dancing, games, craft, stories, prayer time and Rainbow chat, the girls have also had some special visitors join us; the most recent being Debbie Doolittle Wildlife who helped us complete our Roundabout seasons badge. The girls loved this evening as Debbie brought with her a number of different animals such as a ferret, owl, rabbit, hedgehog and fox which they all got to touch, ask questions and listen to stories about all the great rescue work she is involved with.

It's a great encouragement that half of our girls in our unit continue to be from outside the Bloomfield church family and we are able to reach the girls in our community through what we do each Tuesday evening. We've had great opportunities this year to invite friends and family along to our annual Lorne Walk and join with the other Girl Guiding sections for a

Christmas Carol evening which the girls enjoyed before breaking up for the holidays.

Our focus in all that we do is to 'love God' and be 'kind and helpful' and as leaders we're greatly encouraged by the girls desire to learn and get fully involved with our programme of activities.

I am deeply grateful for the dedicated and supportive team we have at Rainbows and would like to thank Jennifer, Stephanie, Hannah and Olivia for all their help over this last year. In September we also saw our team grow with the additional support of Amy Cooper, Ruth Sellar and Ruth Gregg who have shown great enthusiasm in helping us each week.

From everyone at Rainbows we would like to say a big thank you to all who continue to encourage and support us, and in this coming year would ask for your continued prayerful support.

Deborah Simpson, Rainbow Guider

Brownies

The numbers in the Brownies have stayed constant with 40 girls. Each week the girls take part in a varied programme which includes: devotions, games, craft and badges. Highlights have been:

- We were selected for the project *Seeds From Space*. We received two sets of seeds (one set had been in Space, taken by Tim Peake while the other set had remained on Earth). The Brownies planted the seeds and then had to record measurements for several weeks. Both sets of seeds grew well, so it didn't seem to have made much difference whether they had been in space or not.
- Visit from Sunblest pancakes
- Farm to Fork visit to Tesco

- The girls carried out Acts of Kindness for people (some members of the Church even benefitted!)
- We had a visit from actor Alan McKee who did drama workshops with the girls. They loved it. Some Brownies then put on a drama entitled 'Baking a Cake' and performed it at our parent's night and then in Church at the Youth Service
- Visit from the Leprosy Mission. Since the visit we have worn odd shoes to Brownies to remind us to collect stamps to raise money to enable shoes to be given to children who have leprosy. We continue to collect stamps until May 2017. Thank you to all who have collected stamps for us so far.
- To gain their Hostess badge we had a tea party for some of the ladies in the congregation. The girls made invitations, helped serve the tea and provided entertainment. The Brownies loved it and hopefully so did the ladies!
- Joint carol service with rainbows, guides and rangers. We had a great turn out of parents and friends and they enjoyed listening to the epilogue from Reuben and then the mince pies

Members of the congregation have also helped us. Deirdre Bowden organised a fabulous camping party and Joyce Manson, Jean McKnight, Janet Hamilton, Pauline Simons and Heather McKibbin have tested badges for us.

During 2016 we lost the services of Kathryn Boyd and Eloise Johnston due to their studies. We thank them for all their hard work. Lauryn Gibson has now joined the team.

Finally, thank you for praying for us in the past. Please continue to pray for our amazing team in 2017 for patience, wisdom, intuition and energy. The team

consists of: Janessa, Amy, Hannah G, Lauryn, Anna, Hannah C and myself.

Dawn Simons, Brown Owl

69th Belfast Guides

Girlguiding is the largest voluntary organisation for girls and young women in the United Kingdom. Modern Guiding aims to help them gain the confidence, skills and experiences necessary to broaden their horizons and reach for new goals. We provide a unique girl-only space, promote equality and diversity, are relevant to today's girls and give them a voice. Along with seeking to know Jesus Christ and to share his love, that is what meeting on a Tuesday night is all about.

Numbers have stayed steady, if not a little lower than a few years ago, and we continue to follow the guide programme. Following on from the Brownies visit we had Spud Bears at the beginning of the year and were able to donate Teddies and a money contribution to support the work. We joined with the Rangers to have a Roller Disco, which was a great success and no broken bones! The girls enjoyed a trip to We are Vertigo, where Jessica had the pleasure of carrying out an enrolment on one of the trampolines!

We joined 100 other girls and attended Snores & Summores, an activity camp at Lorne. The girls got to go on a climbing wall, do archery, team building games, Bush craft, a high ropes course, a river run and much more. We visited Wee Choco, a social enterprise in Moneyreagh where the girls got to learn about chocolate and make lots of examples. It was also good for them to learn about social enterprise and that their money was supporting young adults with learning difficulties. We also had two amazing nights in the hall with the National Deaf Children's Society and folks from the Blind Centre. It was great to learn of the work

of these groups and they presented in an interesting and challenging way. We were also able to donate financially to both groups to help with the ongoing work. Our Guiding family all joined together to sing Carols and Reuben spoke on the Christmas story. Phoebe and Grace were selected for International trips next year, and Eve, Erin, Lauren, Emily and Beth received their Baden Powell Awards at the City Hall in May. Along with all the usual badge work, games, food and activities it has been a busy year.

As some of you know I was quite ill at the beginning of last year and I must pay tribute to Jessica, Grace, Emily and Sarah as they ran the Unit for about 12 weeks without me – looking good for the future! Thank you also for your kind words and prayers, they meant a lot. Please continue to pray that God would help us to make a difference in the girls lives and show his love to them.

Fay McMullan, Guide Leader

Kidzone

In every yearly cycle of Kidzone there are always stand-out moments that will live long in the memory, moments that strike a poignant spiritual chord and many, many moments that touch our hearts and make us proud.

One moment that will live long in the memory was having a 10 foot silver rocket blasting off in church during our Harvest Family Service! (I must say a huge thanks to Jordan Spence for his expertise and enthusiasm in getting the idea, literally, off the ground!) The Thunderbird 1 rocket blasted off every week in Kidzone as part of our International Rescue theme. The children studied the story of God's rescue of the Israelites from Egypt and their journey to the Promised Land. Through the unfolding story, we were all

reminded of God's provision, forgiveness, grace, guidance and love.

As we look back over the year, a space rocket also provides a valuable analogy of what goes on. A huge amount of effort from a large group of leaders, often unseen, goes into creating, planning and getting Kidzone off the ground. Just like a rocket, Kidzone often creates a lot of noise and excitement, and just as NASA have a serious mission, we too strive to fulfil our mission to point children heavenwards and show them God's love. Behind all of the human effort and endeavour there is a higher power and, as leaders, we need to continually refuel and rely on God's Holy Spirit.

A moment that struck a spiritual chord was the Christmas Kidzone Service which highlighted the wise men and the gifts that they brought to Jesus. The message that hopefully resonated through the service was that we can bring our hearts to Jesus. In Kidzone, we are truly blessed to have teams of leaders that week on week, give their hearts to Jesus through their service in Kidzone. Leaders that have a heart for Jesus, a heart for God's word, a heart for children, and a heart for serving God in this ministry.

One moment during that touched our hearts and made us proud was seeing a ten year old boy stand up in church and profess his faith and understanding of one of God's truths. One of our P7 Kidzoners, Michael Coles, reminded us all that our identity is found in Christ and nothing else. As Kidzone leaders, through the year we see the children growing in their faith and developing a deeper understanding of God's love and his promises. The children's honesty, trust and clarity of thought can often teach us lessons in faith!

Kidzone is a place where we can have giant cowboy bugs called Stinky Pete and Saddlesore Sam teaching us about how God changes us.

Kidzone is a place where we can have groups of children lying on the floor around the Bible discussing God's word and how it impacts our lives.

Kidzone is a place where we can sing and shout and express our worship and praise with enthusiasm and joy.

Kidzone is a place where we can learn memory verses by splatting the minister with shaving foam in a game of Pie Face!

Kidzone is a place where children are encouraged to explore their faith and learn to express their thoughts and prayers to God.

Kidzone is a place where we run around, munch snacks, get crafty and much much more.

Ultimately, Kidzone is a place where, amidst all of the exuberance, activity and busyness, the children see Jesus.

Thank you for all of your prayers and encouragement over the year and please continue to pray for the children and the leaders.

James Cousley, Kidzone Leader

Merge

Merge began this year with strong numbers and a great atmosphere as we saw young people inviting their friends each week. We finished 2015 off with a Christmas party that saw party games, food and a photo booth.

After Christmas the young people returned re-energised and ready for a new year. Moving Merge in mid-2015 from a Saturday night to a Friday night had worked well, so we stuck with Fridays.

We began the year by looking at a series on identity. Throughout this series we would learn that our true identity is not found in our clothing, our interests or our friendship groups; but in God and his word and what it says about his love for us. We were also very grateful to welcome Sarah from the “Big House” as a guest speaker who was able to share with us on this subject.

We then began a series on “mission”. This was an excellent opportunity to look at the great commission and the call to “Go!”. The challenge was put to the young people that this call was for everyday life along with summer mission trips. One of the highlights of this series was welcoming Helen Little who shared with us about her work in Japan, and showed us what her day to day life was like and how she was compelled to live a missional lifestyle.

The last series of the term was a study of the book of James which challenged us all to have an active and living faith that impacts our day to day life! This was an excellent time where we had the opportunity to be creative with our times of teaching. Much of this series was spent in small groups discussing how our faith could be active and reflecting on how it can be all too easy to allow your faith to become dormant (or even a Sunday faith).

Each week at merge we would have different competitions and challenges such as “cups, birdie in a tree, dodgeball, captains ball, long ball, heads or tails, football and dance” (Ask a young person what these are). We are blessed at Merge with very competitive leaders who enjoy taking part in these challenges just as much as the young people.

We finished the term off with a few events such as the annual Crawfordsburn BBQ and “Merge Has Talent 2016!” which showed us just how talented our young people really are!

The summer provided an opportunity for many of our young people to serve and be involved in clubs, teams and outreach both at home and overseas. We decided to take a group of around 25 young people to summer madness this year which proved to be an amazing time where they engaged in worship, teaching, seminars and many different events being offered by summer madness, such as sailing, sport, discos, quizzes and concerts. I was greatly encouraged to see our young people entering into the worship and praying for one and other in morning and evening sessions. One of the highlights for me was seeing our young people attend the morning bible studies and the late night worship, all on their own accord.

We began a new term at Merge in late September to allow for time to organise and plan the year that lay ahead. We decided that it was essential for our young people to grasp the importance of God’s word and how powerful it really is; so we began with a series called “Breath on a page”. This taught us that the bible is Holy and is the inspired word of God, that it is sovereign, that it is a plumb line to which we should measure our lives against, and that it is a means by which God can speak into our lives.

At half term our young people were able to attend the MAD weekend in Coleraine University which saw almost 1000 young people gathering together for fun, fellowship and worship. This is always a worthwhile weekend for our young people as it ignites a passion and a hunger to learn and grow as young Christians, which we are then able to bring back into our Friday night programme at Merge.

After the MAD weekend, and our series on “Breath on a page”, we decided to look at the book of Jonah over four weeks which challenged us in our responses to God, in prayer, in our attitudes toward those who oppose us, and in our understanding of God’s love.

At Christmas we decided that we wanted to celebrate all that had been going on in Merge over the past year, so we held the Merge Christmas semi-formal (Not exactly black tie, but not exactly jeans and a t-shirt either!). This was a massive success as we saw our young people inviting their friends who had never been along to Merge before. A meal was provided along with an ice cream kart from our friends at “PROUD ice cream”. For the entertainment we were thrilled to have DJ Billy Fyffe who many of the young people remembered from their time at summer madness, and the dancing went on late into the night (11pm...). It has been very encouraging to see many of those young people who were invited to the semi-formal, come back to our Friday night programme in the new year.

Merge would not run without a great team of leaders who have served faithfully and passionately. I would like to thank them for all their efforts. Mark and Bea Keown, Malcolm McClure, Sarah McClure, Keith Hooks, Matt Armstrong, Sophie Armstrong, Sarah Hagen, Kensey Bowers, Amy Bowden, Euan McKibben, Pete and Ruth Huey, Gayle Logan, Katie Gibson, Alain Douglas and Kathryn Martin.

Many changes for our leadership team occurred in 2016. We welcomed Alain Douglas and Kathryn Martin onboard, and said goodbye to Katie Gibson, Sarah McClure and Keith Hooks as they headed on to new ventures. Their commitment and love towards our young people was superb and we would like to thank them for all they did during their time at Merge.

Reuben Johnston

Presbyterian women

This is the Day may conjure up many memories in your mind. For some, it may be the chorus “This is the Day

the Lord has made ... we will rejoice and be glad in it”; others may think ‘This is the Day I’m getting married or This is the day My exams start or for some it may be with anxiety you think This is the Day I receive test results or go for investigations’.

As we have looked at our PW theme this year ‘This is the Day ...’ we have explored through various speakers and styles of programme how God is with us, encouraging, guiding and supporting us through the good times and through the storms which can rage in our daily lives.

This year has been a difficult year for our group. Some of our members have been caring for and continue to care for family members through terminal illness, some have experienced personal illness and a slow recovery.

It was with extreme sadness that we learned of the death of Mrs. Maureen Buchanan, following a serious road accident earlier this year. Maureen was a longstanding and faithful member of PW and was President from 1994-1998. Maureen was an inspiration to many people - both young and old and I personally gained encouragement and support from her as she advised me in the ways of PW when I became leader in 2014. We are thankful that Rosemary, Belle and Margaret are recovering and have been able to attend our meetings.

This year we have also been able to celebrate as one of our youngest members got married. This surely will be history in the making!

As a group we have been able to support Simone Pester as she set off to Nepal in early January for a ten-month period with Operation Mobilisation.

We have made links with the ladies in Gilgal church, Rwanda by supporting our church fundraising with a coffee morning. Following the visit by some of our

church members in October we were given a hand crafted plaque as a thank you for our support and as a reminder to pray for the ladies and especially the widows of the church and surrounding area.

PW has been known to stand for 'Pretty Women'!! (which we all have a good laugh at). However, it can also stand for Praise and Worship. As we meet monthly we endeavour to do this as we give God the glory and recognise His Goodness and Faithfulness to us Day by Day.

We financially and prayerfully support our Overseas and Home projects, PCI missionaries at home and overseas and Deaconesses and Chaplains.

If you are free on the first Thursday of the month why don't you come along and join with 50 or so women and experience for yourself the Fun, Fellowship, Friendship and of course Food!

In closing I would like to thank David for his help in setting up the hall for us and for the office staff for their input throughout the year.

Zephaniah 3:5 Morning by morning he dispenses His justice and Every New Day He does not Fail ...

*Pauline Simons, Leader
Jean Brown, Secretary*

The soup club

The Soup Club started in October 2015 and after a successful couple of months it was decided to continue. The Club has gone from strength-to-strength in 2016, with an average of 33 members attending on the third Tuesday of every month in the Megaw Hall.

At the Club each month members are warmly welcomed and after a short epilogue and grace go

onto enjoy a choice of two varieties of soup served with breads, followed by tasty desserts, tea and coffee. The soups have been very varied, including carrot, bacon and lentil, celeriac and apple or tomato with sundried tomato pesto. There's always enough to try both on offer each month. Desserts have included, apple and blackberry crumble, tiramisu, berry cheesecakes, victoria sponges and meringues. In June we had a garden party (in doors) and in December a Christmas party.

A very able team of cooks, hosts and taxi man include, Lynn Currie, Karen Shilliday, Wendy Stevenson, Rosemary Orr, Alison Bester, Renee Irons, Joan Elwood, Jean Brown and David Pearson.

The Soup Club has a very friendly and sociable atmosphere with lots of chat and noise. Members are encouraged to enjoy each other's fellowship and friendship. After all the dishes and tidying is completed the team enjoys lunch and fellowship together too.

We are always happy to welcome new members and volunteers and there is no age limit for either.

Team: Lynn Currie, Alison Bester, Karen Shilliday, Heather McKibbin, Wendy Stevenson, Jean Brown, Joan Elwood, Renee Irons, Rosemary Orr

Sub-merge (youth club)

We have had another good year at Sub-Merge in 2016 with around 20 children coming along each night. In September, as well as welcoming some new P4s, we also said goodbye to a number of our P7s but it's been encouraging to see a few of them moving up to Merge. A number of the children who come along to Sub-Merge do not belong to the Church which is very encouraging.

Sub-Merge meets on Friday nights for children in years P4-P7 from 7.15pm-8.30pm in the outside halls. We have three teams of dedicated leaders who help week by week and try to build stronger relationships with the children who come along. At Sub-Merge, there are various activities on offer such as football, craft, tuck, table football and the most popular of all, the Xbox One – particularly the “Just Dance” and “Fifa” football games. Towards the end of the night, we then have our weekly “Centre Spot” which is a time when the leaders share a passage from the Bible in an interesting and interactive way with the children.

In March 2016, we took the children bowling at Dundonald Ice Bowl. This was a popular choice with the children who thoroughly enjoyed the evening. After the children had used up all of their energy bowling, we then all went to McDonalds for some refreshments.

In October 2016, we took the children to Aunt Sandra’s Sweet Factory on the Castlereagh Road. The children were given a history tour of how Aunt Sandra started making her candy back in the 1940s in a fun and interactive way while Uncle Willy showed them all how to make the candy. Unsurprisingly, this trip proved a big hit with the children given that it involved both tasting and purchasing lots of confectionary!

Finally, I would like to thank all members of the congregation for your continued support of Sub-Merge, both practically by bringing your children along and also in prayer. I would also like to thank all of the leaders who so willingly give of their time on Friday nights to engage and care for the children who come along.

May God continue to provide for both our practical and spiritual needs in the year ahead!

James Gordon, Sub-Merge Leader-in-Charge

Taking care

‘Take Care’ are words which sometimes roll off our tongue as we say farewell to someone we have met in either a casual or formal setting. On saying these words we genuinely are wishing the person(s) well and the phrase is seen as an encouragement. However, when in our church environment ‘Taking Care’ is mentioned people step back and seem to disengage!

Taking Care is the name given to the vetting and Child Protection programme as set out by PCI.

The programme and policies remind us of Best Practise and to ‘Take Care’ when working and playing alongside our children (0-18yrs). It gives guidelines not only to Protect our children but also to Protect the leaders/helpers as they guide, support, instruct and lead our young people both in our weekly activities but also when on residential breaks, outings etc.

In Bloomfield, we are blessed to have so many leaders/helpers and children attend our organisations and activities. Kirk Session has overall responsibility for child protection and the recruitment of new leaders in Bloomfield PC and adheres to the guidelines as set out by the General Assembly and Taking Care office.

Each new leader should be vetted by Access NI and the Taking Care office before being accepted as a leader. As it stands, at present PCI acceptance has to be granted by Access NI approval, no matter how many times the person has been vetted by outside bodies and a certificate received by Access NI stating the person has been accepted to work within the PCI setting.

It is the responsibility of each leader to undertake the mandatory Foundation training followed triennially by a Refresher course which is usually held ‘in house’ with a Taking Care trainer coming to us.

If a leader is unable to attend the proposed meetings they can check the Taking Care website for other dates and venues.

The Bloomfield Child Protection policy was updated this year and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Karen Jardine for her help with this and to Dorothy Wright and David Bailie who help with the administration in the office. (This policy is kept on top of the blue plastic drawers in the resource room and a brief policy is laminated and displayed in the hallway and outside halls as stipulated by PCI).

If anyone has any concerns, issues or questions please contact me for more information.

Many times I feel that I have a hounding role to play in order to keep the necessary registers up to date but please be assured of my support and prayers for you as leaders on the Frontline. As a congregation may we support our leaders in prayer as they meet many children, young people and families week by week.

May our Lights Shine for Him in all we endeavour to do as we Share His Love to those we meet.

Pauline Simons, Designated Person for Child Protection

Toddler group

'Encouraged', sums up how I feel about our Mums & Tots group which meets on Wednesday mornings during term time. It is encouraging that Mums, Dads and carers from our community are using the group and it is lovely to see friendships developing as they gain confidence and share together. Listening to conversations going on in the room it is obvious that for many English is not their first language. Indeed we

have had some ladies without any English at all and it was encouraging that they still felt comfortable to come along and join in, albeit without speaking! Children help bridge so many gaps!

We have been very encouraged that some Mums have taken up the invitation to take a step further and come to church on Sunday. It is encouraging that in a small simple way we have been able to offer food, fun, fellowship and friendship and with God's help we hope we can continue to do that in 2017.

Honor Kernahan, Secretary

Bloomfield walking group

The walking group is an informal gathering of people who meet on the last Saturday of each month to explore the wonderful Northern Ireland countryside. The walking group caters for all levels of abilities from easy flat walks to high level mountain walks with distances ranging from 4 to 10miles. The group also enjoys the participation of people of all ages from 30 to 70 years. Walks during 2016 included:

- Leitrim Lodge to Kilbroney
- Adder's Loanin
- Camlough Mountain
- Roe Valley Country Park
- Brandy Pad
- Sallagh Braes to Glenarm
- Rocky Mountain
- Cranfield Loop
- Mill Race.

This year also included a sponsored walk in June to raise monies for the BPC's building development fund. All walks continue to end with a trip to the local town

or village for coffee or ice cream before returning home. The limbs may be tired but there are always smiles and lots of banter.

This year also saw the second BPC walking weekend take place, with thirty plus walkers descending upon the Four Season's Hotel in Carlingford for 2 nights in October. Saturday was a full day walk starting in Carlingford Village, travelling through Slieve Foye forest returning via the lower slopes of Slieve Foye and over the Barnavave Gap. Sunday morning involved the attendance of a local church service, with the afternoon spent milling around Carlingford town itself. The hospitality and facilities provided by the hotel were very much enjoyed by all.

We look forward to 2017, which will include new walks to the Bann Montaighs and Luke's Mountain finishing off the year in June with another trip to the ever popular Rathlin Island.

The walking group is a great place to meet new friends, gain exercise and to enjoy the wonderful scenery and fresh air that Northern Ireland has to offer whether it be coastal or mountain based.

The group continues to meet at 9.00am on the last Saturday of each month outside the church at the Cyprus Avenue with the exception of July, August and December.

We look forward to welcoming new walkers of any age during 2016.

Vernon Taylor, Group Co-ordinator



