

CALENDAR

Downpatrick, Ballee & Clough Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Churches

January and February 2016

From the Minister:

We certainly had a very busy and enjoyable Christmas in our churches and we now look towards the start of a new year with all its promise and potential. On behalf of Sue and myself I would like to wish everyone a very happy new year.

As ever we are very much in debt to our visiting preachers who fill our pulpits every week. The full preaching plan for the next two months is published in this Calendar with the next joint service being held at Ballee on 31st January. We are very pleased to welcome to the pulpit the Rev Dr William Patterson, the Rev William Haslett, the Very Rev William McMillan and Sue Steers to our churches in the next couple of months.

Our warmest congratulations also go to the Rev William Haslett and the Rev Ernie Boggs (senior minister of Downpatrick Presbyterian Church) who both celebrate the 50th anniversary of their ordination in the month of January.

I will be away a couple of times in January – I will be taking part in the ordination and induction of the Rev Philip Waldron as district minister in Merseyside at Ullet Road Church, Liverpool on the second weekend of January and at the end of January will

be fulfilling a longstanding invitation to preach at Aberdeen Unitarian Church. I will take the greetings and good wishes of our congregations to both places.

The month of January also sees the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (18th – 25th January) and, in a similar way to last year, there will be a special service in our locality in a different church most nights of that week. It would be nice if as many of us as possible could give their support to these services. Fuller details will be available nearer the time but the services are all listed in this Calendar in outline. Each act of worship is meant to represent the usual practice of that particular tradition. The international focus of the Week of Prayer is on Latvia this year and the back page of this Calendar includes some information about the experience of the Christian Church in Latvia.

David Steers

Forthcoming Dates:

Thursday, 7th January

Presbytery of Antrim meeting at Holywood at 7.30 pm.

Tuesday, 23rd February

Presbytery of Bangor meeting at Mountpottinger at 7.30 pm.

| Date | Downpatrick | Ballee | Clough |
|---------------------------|--|---|--|
| 3 rd January | 11:15 am Sue Steers | 9:45 am Rev Dr David Steers | 11:15 am Rev Dr David Steers |
| 10 th January | 11.15 am Very Rev William McMillan | 9:45 am Very Rev William McMillan | 9:45 am Rev Dr William Patterson |
| 17 th January | 11:15 am Sue Steers | 9:45 am Rev Dr David Steers | 11:15 am Rev Dr David Steers |
| 24 th January | 11:15 am Rev Dr David Steers | 9:45 am Sue Steers | 9:45 am Rev Dr David Steers |
| 31 st January | <i>11.15 am Joint Service Ballee</i> | 11.15 am Joint Service Ballee Rev Dr William Patterson | <i>11.15 am Joint Service Ballee</i> |
| 7 st February | 11:15 am Rev Dr David Steers | 9:45 am Rev Dr David Steers | 11:15 am Rev William Haslett |
| 14 th February | 11:15 am Rev Dr David Steers | 9:45 am Sue Steers | 9:45 am Rev Dr David Steers |
| 21 st February | 11:15 am Rev Dr William Patterson | 9:45 am Rev Dr David Steers | 11:15 am Rev Dr David Steers |
| 28 nd February | 11:15 am Rev Dr David Steers | 9:45 am Rev Dr David Steers | 9:45 am Rev Dr William Patterson |

It is good sometimes to be able to make a fresh start, to put the past behind us and look to a better future. New Year provides such an opportunity and many people use this occasion to resolve to do better than in the past.

We are familiar with the New Year symbol of an old man carrying a scythe, representing the dying old year, with a very young lad holding an hour glass with great hopes for the new life ahead. Some North American Indians symbolically extinguish their old fires and scatter the ashes before lighting new ones and seeking the blessing of their gods...

Elsewhere bells are rung, ships' syrens sound, people dance at balls and in public places, sing Auld Lang Syne and greet each other with a kiss.

Yet others quietly celebrate the New Year at a watchnight service in a place of worship, where they dedicate themselves – and the coming year – to God.

*Guide and bless us, O God, so that our future lives may prove a blessing to others and our days be filled with happiness, contentment and peace.
Amen.*

From *Festivals and Celebrations*, Rowland Purton.

Around the Fellowship

Our thoughts and prayers are with all those who have been in hospital recently or had treatment of one kind or another or suffered some injury including Renee Cleland, Barbara Nicholson, George Strain, Sydney McMullan and Thelma Lowry. We wish them all continuing good health. Our best wishes and congratulations go to Gordon Kelly who celebrated his 50th birthday in December.

Downpatrick Table Quiz

The Downpatrick Table Quiz was held on Saturday, 28th November at the Lakeside Inn and was a hugely enjoyable night. Much thanks must go to Arthur Gibson, our question master, and to everyone who helped on the evening, with refreshments, organising the ballot, by donating prizes and by marking the question papers. In addition we raised a total of £765 profit for church funds. Special thanks also goes to Margaret and Geoffrey Ferguson and Anna for hosting the event at the Lakeside Inn which is always such a wonderful venue.

Christmas Services

The joint Christmas Candlelight Service was this year held at Clough on Wednesday, 9th December. The church was beautifully decorated for the occasion which was well attended. All three congregations were represented by the readers – Doreen Chambers, Ryan Rooney, Sarah Cleland, Annabel Cleland, Tierna Kelly, Elsie Nelson, Marion Moffett, Sue Steers, and Andrea Cleland. The organ was played by Alfie McClelland. On Christmas Day we had a joint service for Christmas morning at Downpatrick at which Alfie again played the organ and Sue Steers and Mary Stewart contributed readings. Each congregation also had its own very effective Christmas carol service with great participation by many people including the Sunday Schools with readings and songs and a Nativity play at Clough and a notable visit by Santa to Ballee at the end of the service when he distributed gifts to all the children – and the minister who received a set of general knowledge questions to improve his poor performances at the table quizzes! Thanks go to everyone who helped in any way and especially to those who devised and prepared the services and to our organists Laura Patterson, John Strain and Alfie McClelland.

Sunday School Christmas Events

As well as taking a leading part in all our Christmas services the Sunday Schools also had their own special events over Christmas. On Sunday, 20th December Clough Sunday School had a hugely enjoyed Christmas party. Downpatrick had their party on Monday, 21st December at which Santa made another appearance. We were also pleased to welcome the Rev Paul Reid and his wife Carol to this event. Downpatrick Sunday School had raised £450 for last year's moderator's appeal for Water Aid through the Beetle Drive at Easter and the congregational collection on Children's Day. We were finally able to present this significant sum to Paul for this charity and are grateful to him and Carol for coming along.

On Monday, 28th December a large party of all ages took part in the Downpatrick Sunday School outing to the Belvoir Players to see the pantomime "Rapunzel A Tangled Panto Tale". This was a great afternoon and much enjoyed. On Wednesday, 30th December the Ballee Sunday School outing was to the 'We Are Vertigo' Activity Centre in Newtownbreda which was followed by a lovely dinner in Downpatrick Cricket Club for the children and for those less suited to the strenuous exertions of the

Activity Centre. A big thank you goes to everyone who helped to arrange all of these events which all proved so successful and enjoyable.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

For the last couple of years the format of the services for this week in Downpatrick has changed. Instead of having one big service on the Sunday evening different churches have arranged services for a different night of the week. This year the services that have been arranged are as follows:

Monday, 18th January Saul Church of Ireland; Tuesday, 19th January St Patrick's Catholic Church; Wednesday, 20th January, Downpatrick Baptist Church; Thursday, 21st January Youth Initiatives (above Santander Bank, Market Street). All at 8.00 pm.

Every year the churches in a different country are asked to prepare prayer and worship materials for this week. The resources for this year can be found online at:

<https://ctbi.org.uk/resources-for-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2016/>

This year's material was prepared for worldwide use by the Christians of Latvia and the background to their experience (from the CTBI website) might be of interest:

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Peter's first letter is an encouragement to the newly baptised to live holy lives. The oldest baptismal font in Latvia dates from the time of the great evangeliser of Latvia, St Meinhard. It was originally located in his cathedral in Ikšķile. Today it stands at the very centre of the Lutheran cathedral in the country's capital, Rīga. The placement of the font so near to the Cathedral's ornate pulpit speaks eloquently of the relationship between baptism and proclamation, and the calling shared by all the baptised to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord. This calling forms the theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity for 2016.

Christianity was first brought to Eastern Latvia in the 10th century by Byzantine missionaries. Latvia's story includes the evangelising mission of St Meinhard two hundred years later, and other German missionaries. Riga was one of the first cities to adopt Luther's ideas in the 16th century. In the 18th century, Moravian missionaries revived and deepened Christian faith throughout the country. Their descendants were to play a central role in laying the foundations for national independence in 1918.

During the world wars and the Cold War, Christians were united in common witness to the Gospel - even to the point of martyrdom. They discovered their participation in the royal priesthood mentioned by St Peter through enduring torture, exile and death because of their faith in Jesus Christ. This bond of suffering created deep communion among Christians in Latvia. Through it, they discovered their baptismal priesthood, through which they were able to offer their sufferings in union with the sufferings of Jesus, for the good of others. The Christian churches were leaders in the independence movement of 1991 when unarmed citizens built barricades on the streets of Rīga and stood shoulder to shoulder in defiance of the Soviet tanks.

Today, Latvia is a crossroads where Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox regions meet. Because of this unique location, it is home to Christians of many different traditions, but no single one of them is dominant.

Gathered together by the Archbishop of Rīga, members of a variety of church communities and projects in Latvia were asked to reflect on the chosen theme and the experience of their work. Each of the days has been prepared by one of these diverse Church communities. The 8 Days are linked principally by the experience of being a Christian in Latvia. The authors from Latvia hope their experience of living the Christian faith will speak to ours. The main service is inspired by the verses from Peter's letter and Jesus' metaphors of salt and light which are important cultural themes for Latvia.