



First Dunmurry NSPCI NEWSLETTER

September 2022

From the minister:

It is a great pleasure to be able to write a few words addressed to all our members through this booklet. I commenced as minister here at the start of January and was installed at a special service in March and am gradually getting to know everybody.

Over the last few years we have faced all sorts of challenges and difficulties, not least arising from Covid-19, and we are still finding our way out of the pandemic. In 2022 we have seen a vicious and cynical invasion of Ukraine by Vladimir Putin's Russia which is not only causing considerable suffering to the Ukrainian people but adding to the instability of the world and contributing to increased fuel prices, just part of the increased cost of living that everyone is experiencing.

But these events remind us how important our church is. As part of this community we come together under God to bring our prayers, our hopes and our worship, to bind ourselves together in love and service. Within days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine members and friends at Dunmurry gathered together two van loads of clothes, toiletries, first aid supplies, food and blankets for Ukrainian refugees and we continue to pray for the country and seek to be of service.

Throughout the pandemic we have sought to adhere to the frequently changing rules about public meetings and apply the highest standards of hygiene to our church and premises for members and users. The committee has done an excellent job in this and our church has always remained a safe place. I know many people are still concerned about Covid but as a large and well-ventilated building I have no doubt that coming to church is now one of the things that we can do in life which involves least risk.

Our church at Dunmurry has also responded to the pandemic online and via social media in one of the most comprehensive and effective ways of any church. A lot of this is down to Emma McCrudden, our communications officer, who manages a wonderfully informative and attractive Facebook site (First Dunmurry NS Presbyterian Church) as well as set up the church's website (<https://firstchurchdunmurry.com/>) and congregational YouTube channel (First Dunmurry Non Subscribing Presbyterian Church) where, among other things, you can find audio recordings of the Rev Mac in the pulpit. In addition, when we were first prevented from coming out to church by the pandemic, I set up a YouTube channel for services of worship and reflection (Dunmurry Remonstrant & NS Presbyterian) which continues and which has already had over 34,000 views.



First Dunmurry
NS Presbyterian Church

I have, too, an online blog (<https://velvethummingbee.com/>) which covers a lot of church activity and church related life. All these resources help to keep us together as a community, especially during the strain of the pandemic, but I outline them all here because this newsletter will go to all our members and there may still be some who don't know about them. If you haven't seen them please take a look at them, tell your friends and family about them, there is a lot shared online.

But still, I know, not everyone who wants to come to church can come to church for different reasons. All our members, near and far, whether able to attend or not, are equally part of our community and equally valued. I am gradually trying to get round everyone in visiting, although this will take some time. But if you would like a visit or would just like to get in touch please don't hesitate to get in contact with me on 07935645686 or via email at nspresb@hotmail.com.

We have a lot of really exciting events planned for the church in the weeks and months ahead and they are outlined in this booklet, and a big thank you goes to the editors for putting this booklet together. I hope everyone will support these events and support our worship every Sunday at 11.30 am which is the very heart of our life as a congregation.

Our church has a history of unbroken worship from at least 1676, we continue to have a lot to offer to the world and every one of our members has a part to play.

We should all bear in mind the words of Meister Eckhart, the fourteenth-century German mystic:

Be always ready for the gifts of God, and always for new ones.

Rev. Dr. David Steers



Stay connected:

We encourage you to stay up to date with the goings on of our church through our Facebook page and website. Your engagement on both of these sites enables us to increase our reach, grow digitally and attract new visitors. If you would like to share any content on either platform, please speak to Emma McCrudden.

Website: www.firstchurchdunmurry.com
Facebook: @NSPCIDunmurry

Regular Events

Church Life:

Church Services: Every Sunday at 11.30am

Sunday School: Every Sunday, for children up to age 11

Youth Group: Every Sunday, for children aged 12 plus

Community Life:

Garden Club: First Thurs of month, 2pm

Flower Arranging Classes: First & last Sat of month, 10.30am

Yoga Classes: Group & individual classes, Mon - Wed, weekly

Irish Dancing Classes: Mon & Wed, 3.30pm (for children)

Keep Fit for Seniors Classes: TBC

Support required:

Church Choir: Currently provides music for special services and requires new members. Speak to Allen Yarr if interested.

Church Flower Rota: Anyone wishing to give flowers, please see list on church doors or speak to Pamela Kennedy.

Church Cleaning Rota: More volunteers required urgently. No heavy work. Speak to Sheila McMillan if able to support.

Catering Team: We always need new people to help with special events. Speak to Sylvia McBride if able to support.

Freewill Offering Envelopes: Any queries or new members, speak to Noelle Wilson.



Thankful for those who served before.
Whose faithful service shall not cease.
May we take up the torch they bore.
Strong in God's Strength, His Power, His
peace.

Source unknown

Church Choir:

Sunday, 17th July saw the first outing for our new Church Choir and a big thank you goes out to everyone who has joined and to Allen Yarr our organist and choirmaster. The service was our Favourite Hymns Service and having the Choir helped to lift the occasion and make it such a joyful event. We sang the top six hymns selected by our members (O love that wilt not let me go, Be still my soul, Be thou my Vision, The Lord is my Shepherd, I, the Lord of sea and sky, Immortal, invisible, God only wise) and everyone enjoyed the service greatly. We are still looking for new members, previous experience is not necessary, but if you would like to join please speak to Allen Yarr (*Organist*).



McMillan Library:

Particular thanks are due to Sue Steers for undertaking this task and also to the NSPCI Denomination for their generous financial support for this project.

"Noelle has now completed her catalogue for all Service books, Liturgies, Bibles and other books of interest from one of the Bookcases. I have done not so much, but have been able to catalogue a few more of the books on the Session Room table so we are still continuing to do some work on the McMillan Library. In September we will be working on some of the Boxes of Manuscripts when our group can get together. The construction of the Library furniture is going well with the creation by the carpenter of two side cabinets and a large storage cabinet for Papers and Manuscripts out of the old gentleman's wardrobe."

Sue Steers

Dunmurry Youth Group:

For those aged 12 and over

Hopefully our group will begin on the second Sunday in September (that is Sunday, 11th September). We will go out of the church at the same time as the Sunday School. At the moment we have three members and we will be covering topics ranging from the History of Dunmurry Church, the History of the Denomination, to Castles, the Environment and God's World, especially Animals and their Habitats. Any young people over the age of 12 are welcome to come along and join us.

Auld Belfast

By Tommy Edmont

Wish I was back in Auld Belfast
When times were slower and not so fast
When folk did not care about Mick or Prod
The majority of folk just worshipped God.

There was very few cars and little fuss
You either walked or took a bus
And those who walked did not have a care
The majority could not afford the fare.

A school trip was a day at the Zoo
Where we always found lots to see and do.
There was a bus there that had no sides
And a small steam train to take you for rides.

You travelled to the Zoo in an old red tram
Inside of which all the kids did cram
We were all so happy we hadn't a care
And an old penny was the fare.

Now every night in Auld Belfast
The street lights were powered by gas
And men went around on a bike
Who used a long pole to turn on the light.

Another thing that was sticking out
Was to call at a pub for a few glasses of stout
And on the way there was nothing greater
Than fish and chips wrapped in newspaper.

Then the City Fathers started to fuss
Got rid of the trams and the trolley bus
And when the gas lamps went, what a pity,
They were replaced by the electricity.

And now as I sit in my little backstreet home
Oh how I feel so all alone
I dream of the days which have long since passed
And of how I wish I was back in Auld Belfast.



Tommy Edmont has been writing poems for many years, including reflections on times gone by and recasting Bible stories into verse.

If you have a favourite poem you would like featured in the next edition, please get in touch.

Upcoming Events and Services

September

European Heritage Open Weekend



Once again we will be participating in the European Heritage Open Days in September. This year we will be open on Saturday, 10th September from 11.00am to 2.00pm, and on Sunday, 11th September from 12.30pm (following morning service) to 4.00pm.

This year we will also be holding Tours of the Graveyard led by the minister and looking at some of the more notable or unusual graves in our church yard. Our graveyard dates back to at least the time of the building of the church and contains many fascinating monuments. The tours will take place on Saturday, 10th September at 11.30am and Sunday, 11th September at 2.00pm and will last for about an hour. Everyone is welcome.



Did you know?

Among the old headstones in our graveyard, there is a large one that has an unusual stone carving of a Skull and Crossbones at the head of it. Fear not, it is not a spooky symbol of doom and gloom, rather it is the grave of someone who was a revered member of the Masonic Order, thus marked with the emblem for the Order. It is sited on the side of the graveyard that is between the Church and the McCleery Hall.

October

Quiz Night

To be held in the McCleery Hall at 7.00 for 7.30pm on Friday 7th October. This is to be a fun evening hosted by our very own quiz masters John and Sandra Neill.

We hope to be hosting teams from our neighbouring Belfast churches, but of course, all members and friends will be very welcome indeed.

Godshandiwork Puppets



On Sunday, 9th October at the usual time of 11.30 am we will have a very special service led for us by Godshandiwork Puppets. Created by Sam and Silvana Shaw, Godshandiwork Puppets travel all over the UK and Ireland, and indeed the world bringing their own special brand of energy and fun to worship.

This promises to be a very enjoyable service that will be appreciated by everyone, young and old, but all children are particularly welcome and encouraged to attend.

Upcoming Events and Services

October continued

The History of the Bible

A three part series of illustrated talks by the minister on the history, translation and composition of the Bible. What are the origins of our Scriptures? Who put the Bible together? When and by whom was it translated? What was the role of the Reformation? Why are there so many different translations? All these and other questions will be looked at and everyone is welcome.

The meetings will take place on:

- Thursday, 13th October 7.30pm
- Thursday, 20th October 7.30pm
- Thursday, 27th October 7.30pm

In The McCleery Hall and will be followed by tea and discussion.

Harvest Service

Our annual Harvest Service will be held on 23rd October at 11.30am.

Donations and produce will be very welcome during the previous week for our Harvest displays. Please contact Heather Douglas to offer help with the preparations.

We will also be collecting non perishable food items to support our local foodbank. Foodbanks have witnessed an accelerating crisis across the UK as the need for emergency food dramatically increased in the past six months. This follows the £20-a-week cut to Universal Credit and the soaring rise in living costs that people are facing. All donations are gratefully received during the Harvest service.

November

Holy Communion Service

Our Autumn Holy Communion Service will take place on Sunday 6th November at 11.30am. Everyone welcome.

Remembrance Service

We will be holding our Remembrance Day Service on Sunday 13th November at 11.30am. Everyone welcome.

Ongoing projects:

McMillan Memorial Garden

The planned McMillan Memorial Garden at the side of the McCleery Hall is nearing completion and it is hoped to have the final touches in place for an official opening in the very near future.

Thereafter, the garden will be open to all who wish to sit and relax , reflect and enjoy, at any time of the day. Please do make use of it.

WiFi

The installation of WiFi to the Church and McCleery Hall was to have been completed this summer. However, due to somewhat perplexing complications from the various departments concerned, there appears to be yet another inexplicable delay.

It is our hope that this will be rectified shortly enabling us to engage digitally with a wider audience, in our church and community offerings.

Montserrat: The Emerald Isle of the Caribbean

Diana Taggart

Some years ago, whilst on a small cruise ship sailing around the West Indies, we arrived in Montserrat on the 17th March, the only country in the world outside Ireland that has a public holiday to celebrate St Patrick's Day. The celebrations last for at least ten days and attract large crowds from neighbouring islands as well as the UK. The island is awash with bars selling Guinness, and stalls selling St Patrick's Day themed souvenirs; there is dancing along with parades, traditional games, pub crawls and a full programme of fun-filled events. Everywhere, green and orange, the Montserrat traditional colours, decorate the streets.

But why celebrate St Patrick? In the 17th century, the Island became a haven for Irish Catholics escaping persecution on the other Islands. The 1678 census showed that half the people on the island were Irish so it is hardly surprising that St Patrick was celebrated. Like most Caribbean islands, the economy was based on sugar, cultivated by slave labour. On St Patrick's Day in 1768 there was a slave uprising which was put down but the slaves became revered as martyrs and the day became a day of remembrance, celebrated ever since. Slavery was abolished in 1834 and sugar plantations fell into decline.

In the following decades, nothing much of significance happened. A capital city, Plymouth, was established which by 1995 was the centre of government with the legislative buildings, churches, airport, port, schools, university campus etc, as well as shops, hotels, workshops, offices and of course, dwellings. The surrounding land was mainly farmland, agriculture being the major industry. In 1991, the island population was 11,314, of which, 4000 lived in Plymouth.

However, in 1995 everything changed. The long dormant Soufriere volcano erupted and over the next few years, lava and ash completely buried Plymouth and the surrounding farmland, destroying everything. Two thirds of the island were evacuated and 8000 left the island completely, mainly to the UK, Montserrat being a British Overseas Territory, leaving a population in 2001 of just 4491, crowded into one third of the Island. The devastated area was declared a No-Go area and only now are organised tours permitted to enter the zone. I was on one such tour. All that can be seen of a once thriving city, is the top floors of the tallest buildings still with evidence of hasty evacuation with offices strewn with papers abandoned on desks and in cupboards and filing cabinets. Everything else, city and farmland is buried.

So St Patrick's Day has become a time when many of the evacuees in the UK catch charter flights to return to the Island. All have lost their homes, their family history and their livelihoods. Not even their family graves remain, only memories. But, St Patrick gives them an excuse to return and for ten days, catch up with friends and relatives that have been scattered around the world.

For everyone else---any excuse for a party and a bit of craic!



Swift Bird Conservation Project:

It has been generally recognised that swift numbers have been in decline for some time. This is considered to be partially due to the lack of nesting places when these amazing birds migrate to the UK each spring.

We have made contact with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). A representative when visiting the grounds was very impressed by the natural habitat around the church, including the garden around the manse and the big field at the back of the kitchen.

It is hoped that by next spring we will have swift boxes up near the old coach house and that the Sunday school and congregation will be able to follow these wonderful "birds of the air" as we wait to see if they will find a new home!



Did you know?

- After leaving the nest where they hatched, they'll keep flying non-stop for three years!
- They even eat, mate and sleep in the air - they can 'snooze' with one side of their brain at once, and then switch to the other side
- Some of 'our' swifts migrate as far as South Africa for winter
- Parent swifts gather insect snacks for their chicks, carrying as many as 1,000 at once. Gulp!
- Swifts nest in houses, churches, old factories and many other types of building - they squeeze through small gaps to nest in cavities inside roofs and walls.
- At dusk, groups of swifts fly at high speeds around the areas where they are nesting, screaming.

The Roots of Protestant Dissent in Dublin

On Saturday, 11th June members of Dunmurry along with members of First Belfast and All Souls' Non-Subscribing Presbyterian churches enjoyed a great visit to Dublin. We were made very welcome by the Unitarian congregation on St Stephen's Green and treated to an excellent tour of sites connected with the roots of Protestant Dissent in Dublin by Rory Delany.

Rory has a fund of knowledge about the history of Dublin and of the different strands of Dissent in the city, which largely date back to the period of Oliver Cromwell. We were taken on a fascinating walk around some of both the familiar and not so familiar parts of Dublin and all of us gained a deep insight into the way Dissent – Independency – Presbyterianism – Unitarianism – developed in the city and the contribution made by members of the Dissenting churches to the history of the city.

Rory gave us an outline of the plan before we set off. The Unitarian Church was built in 1863 by the congregation of Strand Street and four years later it was joined by the congregation of Eustace Street. These two congregations contained many of the leading merchants in the city, families which had played an important part in civic life for decades, and were groups which were rooted in at least four churches which had maintained a continuity of existence from Cromwellian and Puritan times onwards.

Perhaps the most direct stream of religious life which fed in to the modern church on St Stephen's Green was that of Wood Street. The first minister connected with this congregation is usually said to be John Owen, a leading Puritan divine who came to Dublin as chaplain to Oliver Cromwell and later became dean of Christ Church, Oxford during the Commonwealth. The congregation may date back to Elizabethan times but the first minister in Wood Street itself is thought to be Stephen Charnock who came to Dublin as chaplain to Henry Cromwell in 1655. A fellow of Trinity College, Dublin he was a 'lecturer' at St Werburgh's and returned to England following the Restoration in 1660.

Wood Street was the scene of the ministry of Daniel Williams for approximately 20 years.



Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin

The Roots of Protestant Dissent in Dublin - continued

Welsh-born he moved to London in 1687 and became the leading figure in English Dissent, establishing the library that bears his name to this day. Other distinguished and sometimes controversial ministers to serve this congregation include Joseph Boyse, Thomas Emlyn, John Abernethy and James Duchal. The congregation moved to Strand Street in 1764.

Eventually New Row moved to Eustace Street in 1728. Nearby was a Quaker meeting-house and Rory told us that one of the Quakers said of the Eustace Street meeting-house that 'When there is so much vanity without, there won't be much religion within'. But it is actually a very well-proportioned and elegant building, although eighteenth-century Quakers had their own view of such things. Having said that what survives of Eustace Street today is only the facade and that is not shown off to best effect by the banners hung outside by the Ark Theatre group that use the new building.

We had a brief look at the City Hall, built originally as the Royal Exchange in 1779 by the precursor of the Chamber of Commerce. The merchants who made up the membership of the Chamber of Commerce included a disproportionate number of Protestant Dissenters, and of these a large proportion were members of one of the three Presbyterian (Unitarian) congregations in Dublin. Indeed, Rory told us, a majority of the Presidents of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce between 1785 and 1870 were trustees or members of the congregations which went on to form the St Stephens Green congregation.

It was a wonderful day full of interest and we are all indebted to Rory for sharing his considerable knowledge with us.

Rev. Dr. David Steers



The burial ground of St Nicholas' Church, now a Peace Garden

QUIZ Night!

**Friday 7th
October 2022**

**7.30 PM
START**



**HOSTED BY QUIZ MASTERS
JOHN & SANDRA NEILL**



**McCleery Hall
Glebe Road
Dunmurry**

***FREE
ENTRY***

**REFRESHMENTS
AVAILABLE**

**Email firstdunmurrynsp@gmail.com
to register in advance**