

Immanuel Presbyterian Church



Annual Report and statement of accounts

For year ending 31 December 2023

Minister's Letter

To all members of Immanuel

Throughout 2023 we were studying the psalms on Wednesday evenings and we have continued to do so in 2024. We recently looked at Psalm 92 which is entitled 'A psalm. A song. For the Sabbath Day.' And it begins with these words:

***It is good to praise the Lord and make music to your name, O Most High,
to proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night,
to the sound of the ten-stringed lyre and the melody of the harp.***

We're to imagine God's Old Testament people, setting aside their work and gathering together on the Sabbath Day to praise the Lord and to make music to his name. Every Sabbath morning and evening they gathered before the Lord to proclaim his steadfast love and faithfulness.

The psalmist says that it is good to praise the Lord like this. He means it's the right thing to do. It's fitting. It's appropriate. It's right to praise the Lord. Why is it right to praise the Lord? The psalmist goes on to explain:

For you make me glad by your deeds, O Lord.

Praising the Lord is the right thing to do, because he makes us glad by the things he has done. And the Lord has done great things for all of us, hasn't he? He made us and he sustains us. He has also filled our lives with good things to enjoy. He has equipped us with talents and abilities and knowledge and wisdom to do all the things we have to do each day. He's surrounded us with family and friends and he's given us work and rest. When we are in trouble or in need, he provides us with all kinds of people with the knowledge of expertise to help us.

Not only has he done all of that for us, but he also sent his Only Begotten Son to deliver us from our sin and misery and he sent his Spirit into our lives to enable us to repent and believe and to renew us in his image. He's given us the assurance of sins forgiven and the fellowship of other believers to encourage us. And he's given us the hope of everlasting life in the new and better world to come.

Think how miserable we would be if God had not done any of these good things for us. Think how empty and bleak and miserable our lives would be. But the Lord has done great things for us and by his deeds he has made us glad.

And since the Lord has made us glad, it's right and fitting and proper for us to praise the Lord and to declare his love and faithfulness every Sabbath morning and evening.

For the Israelites in Old Testament times, the Sabbath was the seventh day of the week, because God finished creating the world on the seventh day. For believers today, the

Sabbath is the first day of the week, because that's the day the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead. But though the Sabbath Day has changed, what God's people do on the Sabbath Day has not changed much: we still gather before the Lord to proclaim his love and faithfulness. God's people have done this throughout history, because it is always good and right and proper for us to praise the Lord and to make music to him and to declare his love and faithfulness to us.

By God's grace, we were able to praise the Lord throughout 2023. And we should look to the Lord to help us to do the same throughout 2024 and into the future. And one day, because of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus, we'll join with God's people from every nation to praise him forever and forever in the glory to come.

Colin Gamble
Belfast, Northern Ireland
gamblec@gmail.com

Office Bearers 2023

Minister Emeritus

Rev. Victor Patterson

Clerk of Session

Alan Bridle

Deputy Clerk of Session

Russell Coates

Congregational Secretary

Timothy Fitzsimons

Asst. Congregational Secretaries

Elders and Congregational Committee during 2023

District	Elder	Committee
1	D Bailey	N Simpson E White
2	T Smith	E Coates
3	R Coates	M Murphy
4	D Harvey	I Houston
5	R Coates	S Irwin
6	M Beck	P Irwin
7	T Hamilton	J Smith M Bryans
8	J Fittis	C Hamilton
9	B Davidson	W Watt
10	T Irwin	D Bridle
11	Acting Elders	M Gregg
12	S Houston	J Anderson R Newburn
13	I Stewart	P Bailey
14	A Bridle	

Elders and Congregational Committee during 2023

Elder Emeritus

N Cranston

H McClure

J McKelvey

G Ussher(Dec)

Committee

T Fitzsimons

K Harvey

D Newburn

Church Sub-Committees during 2023

Finance

Convenor: K Harvey

Committee: A Bridle, E Coates, E White

Property

Convenors: D Newburn & S Houston

Committee: R Coates, T Smith, W Watt

Reception

Convenor: I Houston

Committee:

Kitchen & Cleaning J Smith

Committee E Coates

Organisation Leaders and Church Agents

Anchor Boys Leader Mrs E Coates
Bible Reading Notes Mrs J Anderson
Boys' Brigade Captain Mr S Houston
Child Protection Officer Mrs B Gregg
Children's Church Leader Mrs M Cooke
Christian Endeavour President..... Rev. C Gamble
Church Magazines Mrs J Stewart
Cradle Roll Mrs R Irwin,
Creche Leader Mrs R Irwin
Flowers for Church Mrs K Bridle
Fresh Mr P Bailey, Ms J McAteer
FWO Secretary Miss E White
Girls' Brigade Captain Mrs M Cooke,
Junior CE Leader Mrs G Beck
Junior Section Lieut. in Charge Mr P Irwin
Leprosy Representative Mrs E Paddock
Immanuel Tots Mrs Dorina Bailey & Mrs K Harvey
Presb. Orphan & Childrens Soc. Mr A McAteer
Presbyterian Women Leader Mrs Y Gamble
Tea Leaf..... Mrs L Bingham
Tear Fund Representative..... Miss N Simpson
Wider World Agent Mrs Y Gamble
Women's Bright Hour Leader Mrs M Murphy
Youth Fellowship Leader..... Mr & Mrs D Bridle

Notices - see also Church Website www.immanuelbelfast.com

- Public Worship Sunday 11.30 am and 7.00 pm.
Children's Church Each Sunday during morning worship.
Creche..... Each Sunday during morning worship.
Sacrament of the Lord's Supper .. At morning worship First Sunday
January, April and October;
last Sunday in June. (Normally)
Youth Fellowship..... Sunday 8.15 pm.
Junior Christian Endeavour..... Monday 7.00 pm.
Kirk Session Fourth Monday 7.30 pm.
Congregational Committee 2nd Mon 7.45 pm. Sept, Nov, Feb, May
Presbyterian Women 1st Monday each month 7.45pm
Women's Bright Hour..... Tuesday 3.00 pm.
Girls' Brigade..... Explorers & Juniors Tuesday 6.45 pm
Seniors & Brigaders Tuesday 7.45 pm
Mid-week Bible Class Wednesday 7.45 pm.
Immanuel Tots Thursday 10 am - 12 noon
Boys' Brigade Anchor Boys Thursday 6.45 pm
Junior Section Thursday 7.00 pm
Company Section Thursday 7.45 pm.
Mens Prayer Meeting..... Thursday 7.00 pm.

Kirk Session Report 2023

KIRK SESSION REPORT 2023 Draft v 1.1 January 24.

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:1-3)

“Polycrisis” and “Permacrisis” were two of the words of the year again in 2023 as events on the global stage and closer to home brought much heartache and despair. The continued war in Ukraine was followed by renewed and bloody conflict in the Middle East while the continued suspension of the Stormont Assembly and ongoing financial constraints on public services and among households with cost-of-living pressures were enduring. We didn’t have to look far to see bad news. Yet, as Christians we are called to proclaim the good news of the gospel to a needy world and the verses above – covered in one of Rev Gamble’s sermon series during the year – bring timely reassurance of the status of the believer “in Christ” and instruction to apply both our hearts and minds to seek heavenly things, whatever is happening all around us. It is there we find true joy in serving God.

The Kirk Session would again place on record our thanks to Rev Colin Gamble for his faithful ministry of the Word and sacraments during 2023, for his studies in both the Old and New Testaments and during the midweek prayer meeting. His pastoral visitation is also appreciated and an ageing congregation has inevitably resulted in him conducting funerals on a more regular basis. This has also brought a requirement for additional catering and we again express our sincere thanks to the ladies who freely give of their time for these and many other occasions during the year. It is much appreciated.

In October, George Ussher, elder emeritus, was called home and we give thanks for his life and service for His Lord and His church in this place. We continue to remember all in the church family who have been bereaved in the last year and commit them to the care and keeping of Almighty God in these days.

2023 was a year of elections in Immanuel and we congratulate all who have come through to serve on either the congregational committee or, in due course, on Kirk Session. May they find joy in service and for the task ahead. Psalm 100:2 instructs us to “serve the Lord with gladness; come before his presence with singing”. The Kirk Session would again express our gratitude to all the leaders and helpers in our organisations over the past year for their faithful dedication to the work and their witness to all who come into our premises. The work among children and youths can be particularly difficult and we must pray for continued wisdom and patience. At the annual de-brief meeting with leaders in the summer, the challenge of succession planning was again highlighted. The annual report also affords an opportunity to say “thank you” to the church secretary and treasurer for their work in 2023 and to the musicians, those who operate the sound desk and to numerous others who work quietly in the background on the tasks that allow the church to operate. As Clerk, I would again express my personal thanks to Russell Coates, the deputy clerk, for his ever-willing help during the year.

At the start of 2023, the Kirk Session was pleased to appoint Mrs Barbara Gregg as our Designated Person to help keep us compliant with all the regulations regarding Child Protection and Safeguarding. We thank Barbara for taking on this important role and pray that she will be blessed as she serves in this capacity.

2023 will also be remembered as the year of coronation for King Charles III and as a church we were able to mark this historic occasion in May with a service and special lunch when we were reminded of the “King of Kings” and all that He has done and will continue to do for us. Some of the children from the church organisations took part in the service. The Kirk Session is very aware that it is only on the occasions when the children are participating, will the parents and guardians attend a service of worship. This is a pattern repeated elsewhere. However, we do give thanks to the group of ladies who took the initiative to come down and engage with the parents of children in JCE, GB and BB while they were waiting for their children in the halls on the nights when they were meeting.

In general, attendance numbers at morning and evening worship, while lower relative to the past, were relatively steady. However, it is encouraging to report an extra helper was needed to cope with the growth in crèche numbers while the Tea Leaf was able to resume after an extended period when Mrs Lauren Bingham came forward with an offer to lead. Towards the end of 2023, it was also good to see the Caring Team being refreshed and remobilised to support and look in on some of the older members who perhaps live alone or have particular pastoral needs.

Ahead of the start of the winter’s work, the Kirk Session issued a letter to the congregation on the importance of corporate prayer and accompanied this with a little card, as a reminder and encouragement for more to take the opportunities available to gather together before the evening service and especially at the midweek prayer meeting. On occasion, the numbers for the former have been a little higher while on Wednesday nights the numbers are broadly unchanged. We would repeat that not only will you be blessed by gathering with others, but your attendance will be an encouragement to others.

At Easter, we were pleased to join again with our friends at West Kirk in sharing Good Friday and Easter Sunday evening services with the venues reversed from the previous year. In the summer, the outreach programme continued with open-air meetings in May and door-to-door visitation in late August. Gospel tracts were again distributed at Easter and Christmas and we appreciate all who took part and helped. It is recognised that this work is becoming more challenging with many reporting on more doors being closed and relatively few people in the district prepared to engage at the door-step in a meaningful conversation about the gospel.

For the second consecutive year, we were very pleased to have special choirs leading the worship at both the Harvest and Christmas services and this was enjoyed by all. Our thanks to Karen Fitzsimons for arranging and leading and to all the enthusiastic members who participated. The occasional “songs of praise” after the evening service were also well received.

In December, we were pleased to host a Youth event organised by Presbytery when over 120 teenagers and young people gathered for a time of praise and to hear of some of the dangers of social media in a presentation from the Love for Life organisation. Thanks to all who helped facilitate and provide supper. The Session recognises these are especially difficult times for teenagers and young people with all the apparent attractions and temptations and when it is all too easy to be led astray. Please make this a priority in your prayers.

During the year, there were a number of specific items on the Kirk Session agenda which commanded attention. Following changes approved at the General Assembly, a recommendation from Kirk Session to transfer our Trustees to a new legal entity – The Presbyterian Church in Ireland Holding Trustee Company - was approved at a meeting of the congregation before Christmas while further consideration was given to PCI’s Back Together Again document which challenges the leaders of congregations to reflect afresh on church life and witness in a post-pandemic world when much has changed. Towards the end of the year, the Kirk Session received a presentation from Mr Phil

Dunn of EMF on what partnering with one of the Mission's associated churches would entail. This information was subsequently shared with the congregation as part of a wider consultation. In a sign of changed times, our minister and some elders attended a PCI conference on Pastoral Care aimed at those struggling with issues of gender identity and same sex attraction. Some also attended and found benefit from an evening on "Renewing your Calling as an Elder" while others participated on a seminar on evangelism.

At the end of 2023 we heard the sad news that Jersey Street City Mission – with whom we have had a long and important association – was to close and Immanuel was represented at the final service on Christmas Eve. We give thanks to God for the work of the mission in proclaiming the gospel to children and families in the Shankill area over many decades and the faithful devotion of those who were called to serve. We remember Tom and Deborah Gamble as they seek the Lord's will for the times ahead.

At the time of writing, a new year appears to stretch out ahead of us with all its uncertainties, crises, joys and sorrows but as the old chorus reminds us ... "I know who holds the future and he holds it in his hands, with God things don't just happen, everything by him is planned".

May we find comfort and reassurance in such times and follow Paul's instructions to the church at Philippi – ***"Do not be anxious or worried about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving continue to make your requests known to God". (Philippians 4:6)***

***Alan Bridle
Session Clerk***

Committee Report 2023

Psalm 127 verse 1: Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it.

This is my eighth report as Congregational Secretary of Immanuel Presbyterian Church.

The Committee continues in its role of stewardship on behalf of the Congregation.

Following a recommendation from the Interior design Subcommittee, it was decided to purchase two coffee tables to sit between the settees and a smaller round table to sit between the single seats in the link area.

The Committee also discussed the possibility of serving coffee in the link from a coffee machine in the area at the display cabinet. However, concern was raised by a number of members about the possible fire risk. It was agreed that the area be surveyed by a health and safety specialist. The specialist's report concluded that due to a main exit and exits to other parts of the building in the link area that no electrical appliance could be installed there because of the fire risk. Therefore, tea and coffee could only be served via canisters in the link. All organisation Leaders were informed of this.

The Committee had also hoped to install a 50 - inch television in the link on which messages and information about the Church activities could be displayed. However, the report of the health and safety specialist that electrical appliances could not be installed in the link meant that this proposal was no longer viable.

Concern was expressed by Committee members about potential damage to the settees in the link if they were accidentally pushed into the feature wall. The maintenance Subcommittee fixed a device to each of the settees which prevented the settees from being pushed into the feature wall.

The annual treatment of the roof space cold tank in the Simms Hall was carried out to eradicate the Legionella bacteria from the tank.

The Committee was asked by the Secretary to review the arrangements for Car watching which had been in place since 2006. The Committee decided to change from the current arrangement of two car watchers morning and evening to one car watcher in the mornings throughout the year and in evenings during Spring and Summer and two car watchers in the evenings during Autumn and Winter.

G4S, who maintain the fire and intruder alarm systems had contacted the church about the need to replace all the sensors and control panel for the fire alarm system. The maintenance Subcommittee invited tenders for the work from three providers for the replacement of the sensors, the fire alarm panel and the maintenance of the Fire alarm and intruder alarm systems. The maintenance Subcommittee recommended that the bid from Digital Fire and Security for £8,077.79 for the installation of new sensors and one years' maintenance for the fire alarm and intruder alarm systems be accepted. The Committee agreed to accept the bid and the new sensors and a Fire control panel were installed before Christmas 2023. The original sensors had been expected to last 10 years but had in fact lasted 16 years.

Glenn Murphy was appointed to carry out maintenance and safety checks on the Church Minibus, which had previously been carried out by the Secretary. The Secretary continues to look after the Minibus Insurance and arrangements for the annual MoT test.

It must be remembered that a lot of preparation takes place each week to ensure that the church is ready for the Sunday services and the other meetings and activities throughout the week. The Committee has to ensure that the Church and halls are safe, that the heat is on, that all legal requirements are fulfilled, that the bills are paid.

I would like to thank of all members of Committee and Elders involved for their help and support with this.

As always, the Committee values the prayers of the Congregation. I would ask that they continue to pray that the Committee would have wisdom to make good decisions that will bring honour and glory to the Lord.

Tim Fitzsimons
Secretary

Free will Offerings(FWO) 2023

Envelope	Amount	Amount			
2	40.00	63	120.00	127	2400.00
3	2500.00	64	465.00	130	110.00
5	5.00	65	740.00	250	1250.00
6	1095.00	67	110.00	251	1032.00
8	2540.00	69	480.00	252	600.00
9	580.00	71	1750.00	253	600.00
12	2650.00	72	550.00	254	1300.00
13	270.00	75	1720.00	255	480.00
16	42.00	76	2210.00	256	360.00
17	440.00	77	1200.00	257	1420.00
18	280.00	80	70.00	258	820.00
20	212.00	81	440.00	259	1050.00
21	500.00	82	1200.00	260	480.00
22	180.00	83	1190.00	261	360.00
23	1390.15	84	480.00	262	2830.00
24	221.30	85	440.00	263	1200.00
25	1110.00	86	870.00	265	2420.00
27	3000.00	87	500.00	266	2080.00
28	270.00	88	310.00	267	3300.00
30	430.00	89	55.00	268	750.00
31	125.00	90	320.00	269	920.00
32	2855.00	91	10.00	270	400.00
33	1440.00	92	620.00	271	1130.00
34	1247.00	94	515.00		
36	275.00	95	60.00		
37	1320.00	96	7150.00		
38	1370.00	97	210.50		
39	1710.00	98	410.00		
40	2000.00	99	500.00		
41	340.00	100	35.00		
43	2540.00	101	460.00		
44	10.00	102	167.00		
45	570.00	103	3290.00		
46	710.00	104	265.00		
47	1260.00	105	440.00		
48	545.00	106	500.00		
49	2250.00	108	1300.00		
51	1800.00	111	500.00		
52	490.00	112	500.00		
53	172.00	113	146.00		
54	1640.00	114	36.00		
55	1060.00	115	4120.00		
56	705.00	116	675.00		
57	132.00	118	120.00		
58	210.00	120	50.00		
59	275.00	121	460.00		
61	260.00	125	156.00		
62	530.00	126	80.00		

Immanuel Organisations 2023

120th Belfast Company Boys Brigade (Junior Section & Anchor Boys)

To	Bal C/Fwd	296.93	By	BB Lunch, Drinks etc	74.00
"	Donations	40.00	"	Christmas & Easter Gifts	102.40
"	Registrations	140.00	"	Uniforms, Crafts & Resources	35.00
			"	Outings & Parties	87.00
			"	Display Gifts & Prizes	52.50
			"	Cash in hand	126.03
		<u>476.93</u>			<u>476.93</u>

120th Belfast Company Boys' Brigade (Company Section)

To	Bal C/Fwd	3,555.03	By	Bank Fees / Charges	34.00
"	Cash in Hand	815.00	"	BB UK Capitation fees	835.00
"	EA Authority Grants	1,600.00	"	Tear Fund Sponsorship	180.00
"	Immanuel PC Subs & Other	3,745.00	"	Summer activities & refreshments	290.00
"	Donations	1,120.00	"	Christmas breakfast & gifts	65.00
"	Tuck Shop receipts	263.00	"	Christmas Outing	245.00
"	Interest	22.50	"	Men's Night	70.00
			"	Zip Tops	430.00
			"	Prizes, registration & sundries	150.00
			"	Dunluce, camp activities	2,686.91
			"	Tuck Shop costs	140.00
			"	JS guest visitor	150.00
			"	Balance in Bank	5,844.62
		<u>11120.53</u>			<u>11120.53</u>

Fresh

To	Balance b/fwd	2813.61	By	Transfer to Church	2813.61
		<u>2813.61</u>			<u>2813.61</u>

Immanuel Tots

To	Balance b/fwd	154.00	By	Books	240.00
"	Gifts	330.00	"	Events	338.05
"	Dues	301.05	"	Supplies	152.00
			"	Cash in hand	55.00
		<u>785.05</u>			<u>785.05</u>

Presbyterian Women

To	Balance b/fwd	190.76	By	Speakers	60.00
"	Cash in Hand	105.70	"	Independent Missions:-	
"	Offerings	289.20	"	Mercy Ships	150.00
"	Mission Donations	2490.00	"	Vine Centre	150.00
"	Membership		"	LIFT	150.00
"	subscriptions	78.00	"	Wycliffe	150.00
			"	Open Doors	170.00
			"	City Mission	210.00
			"	Slavic Gospel Association	150.00
			"	Moldova	100.00
			"	Heating and Light	80.00
			"	Leprosy Mission	100.00
			"	Jersey St City Mission	100.00
			"	David Murphy	100.00
			"	PCI Missions	1020.00
			"	Tearfund	100.00
			"	Bank Fees	52.94
			"	Balance in Bank	115.54
			"	Cash in Hand	195.18
		<u>3153.66</u>			<u>3153.66</u>

Tea Leaf

To	Balance b/fwd	499.05	By	Donation to NSPCC	100.00
"			"	Donation to Red Roof - Moldova	100.00
"			"	Donation to Imm. JCE	100.00
"			"	Donation in memory of Mrs I McKelvey	30.00
"			"	Cash in Hand	169.05
		<u>499.05</u>			<u>499.05</u>

Youth Fellowship

To	Easter	270.00	By	Easter	1,453.36
"	Balance in Bank	1,410.05	"	Grant refund	116.00
"	Gift from Committee	800.00	"	Fellowship	805.60
"	Donations	420.00	"	Balance in Bank	525.09
"	Cash in Hand	111.32	"	Cash in hand	111.32
		<u>3011.37</u>			<u>3011.37</u>

Junior CE

To	Balance b/fwd	1396.82	By	CE Sunday Catering	152.30
"	Gifts	340.00	"	Resources	54.50
"	Bank Interest	0.77	"	Easter Egg Gifts	105.00
			"	Christmas Gifts	80.83
			"	Museum trip bus	175.00
			"	Account closure transfer to main church account	1095.76
			"	Cash in Hand	74.20
		<u>1737.59</u>			<u>1737.59</u>

Young People's CE

To	Balance b/fwd	245.71	By	Expenses	218.31
"			"	Transferred to Church	27.40
		<u>245.71</u>			<u>245.71</u>

234th Belfast Girls Brigade

To	Balance b/fwd	3,854.62	By	Awards & Presents	766.53
"	Donations	85.00	"	Badge Work	158.56
"	GB Week Fundraising	2,468.55	"	Bank Fees	44.01
"	Uniform Sales	86.00	"	Crafts	188.79
"	Grant	1,600.00	"	District Fees	60.00
"	Registration Fees	660.00	"	Equipment & Resources	168.80
			"	GB Enrolments	55.40
			"	HQ Assessments	963.42
			"	Parents Night	71.25
			"	Parties, Outings & Activities	1,510.51
			"	Uniforms	251.00
			"	Cash in Hand	849.82
			"	Balance at Bank	<u>3,666.08</u>
		<u>8754.17</u>			<u>8754.17</u>

AGM March 2023

2023 Income		2023 Expenditure	
Unrestricted Funds	£	Unrestricted Funds	£
FWOs etc	112732	Total assessments	20369
Property	8238	Salaries & Allowances	52263
United Appeal	8018	Other Congregational Expenses	47230
Missions & Charities	11170	Property	12037
Other Funds	10738	United Appeal	7800
Unrestricted Total	112732	Missions & Charities	24878
Restricted Total	38164	Other Funds	7268
Income Total	150896	Expenditure Total	171845