



Early picture of the church by U. Spry

1st Presbyterian Non-Subscribing Church

Downpatrick

Tercentenary Celebrations 2011

Introduction

That our meeting house has been used for the worship of God in our tradition for a full three hundred years is a remarkable fact. It is something worthy of celebration and that is exactly what we did in 2011 and it is pleasing to look back on a year full of interesting and enjoyable events that marked the building's tercentenary. Over the whole twelve months we shared in events that were, by turns, prayerful, spiritual, uplifting, historical and humorous. Other milestones were marked by church members over the year including weddings and baptisms and we engaged in a number of significant special events with our church partners in the town and within the denomination. All these things are recorded here and we have Miss Mary Stewart, our church secretary, to thank for this. Mindful of the difficulties involved in writing her own congregational history, which was so successfully launched in 2011, Mary wanted to record the various high points of the tercentenary year for future generations. We know that one hundred years ago the bicentenary was celebrated in various ways but not all of these were clearly recorded. Future generations – and this present generation too – will be grateful to Mary for bringing everything together in this little book. It was a richly textured and exciting year that illustrated the strength and commitment of the congregation. On a personal note 2011 was also marked by a spell of ill-health that meant that I missed some of the long anticipated events but I sincerely thank everyone for their prayerful help and support which meant so much to me and my family.

With this little book we can look back now on a very successful year, a fitting culmination to three hundred years of work and worship in this place and the prelude to the next three hundred years. When people ask what we did to mark the tercentenary of the meeting house they need only look at this book. An especially big thank you goes to Mary not only for all her hard work organising and preparing so many things but also for faithfully recording all that we do and for bringing it together in this publication.

Rev. Dr. David Steers

Activities of the 1st Presbyterian NS Church, Downpatrick

Tercentenary Year 2011

December 2010

Having experienced the lowest December temperatures for 100 years and the severest snow falls for a quarter of a century it is not surprising that the Christmas events in the Downpatrick Church were severely disrupted. With the temperature plummeting to -18°C and remaining low for well over a week the two falls of snow commencing in the fortnight before Christmas left all roads but in particular the country roads in a treacherous condition. Christmas shopping and celebrations were severely curtailed.

Downpatrick was brought to a standstill and the through roads closed as traffic was unable to negotiate the hills. The church too was cut off and parking was impossible resulting in the cancellation of two services, for the safety of all our members, the Carol Service on the 19th and the Boxing Day united service. The united Christmas Day Service in Ballee was not accessible for many.



As this report indicates the appalling winter weather left the members very anxious to return to normality. Fortunately for the Tercentenary Year many interesting events and memorable services had been planned. Below are summaries of these occasions with some photographs to illustrate the events.

New Year's Service 2nd January 2011

The members of Downpatrick were pleased to be able to attend the New Year service conducted by Mr. David McCord on 2nd January 2011 at which he not only welcomed the new year but appropriately made reference to the first service of the building's tercentenary year.

On 9th January Rev. Dr. Steers preached an enlightening sermon on the astrological and astronomical predictions of Epiphany and the visit of the Magi.

The children's party was held on the previous evening but Dr. Steers presented the Sunday School scholars with the Christmas gifts from Father Christmas. We sincerely thank Marion Moffett and Annabel Cleland for these arrangements. We also thank Jackie Strain for erecting and dismantling the Christmas trees, Samuel and Myrtle McBride for their ongoing refurbishment of the Minister's room, Geoffrey Ferguson for salting the church avenue and Margaret Ferguson for the January floral display.

In this historical year we wish all our members and readers a most healthy and prosperous new year and look forward to welcoming them at our special events in the months to come.

Tercentenary Celebrations Begin:

History was both re-visited and made in the 1st Presbyterian NS Church, Downpatrick on Sunday 30th January 2011 when the Rev. Dr. David Steers, Minister and Rev. Harry Robinson, minister of the Downpatrick Presbyterian Church conducted a joint service in the Stream Street building. Attending were the congregations of Downpatrick, Clough and Ballee NS Presbyterian and Downpatrick and Ardglass Presbyterian of which the ministers have joint charge.

Rev. Dr. Steers outlined the establishment of the dissenting Presbyterians who first worshipped in their single storey building at the Flying Horse in 1650. It was, he added, not until after 1708 that political and religious freedom enabled the Presbyterians to establish themselves in Downpatrick. This they did on a site acquired from the Southwell Estate and on 20th November 1711 Rev. Thomas Nevin was installed in the Stream Street building which has remained virtually unchanged in 300 years.

We were reminded that the roots of all the worshippers had begun on this site and in this building which we came to honour, united in one mind, to worship and extend the word of God.

The lessons from Isaiah ch51 and Ephesians ch4 set the theme of unity with God. It was on this subject that Rev. Robinson delivered a most measured and inspirational sermon how the similarities of our churches outweigh their differences. The minister acknowledged the split in the 19th century and wondered what might have happened had this not occurred. However the politics of the time could not be eradicated but today we can still learn from history. Revs Henry Cooke and Henry Montgomery were very strong personalities of the time, each a champion of his cause. The followers of Cooke championed direction while those of Montgomery sought personal freedom.

Rev. Robinson was quick to note that in some ways the separation had allowed for the development of Presbyterianism and yet by uniting to celebrate the congregations today continued to prove the Bible and the word of God were at the centre of their faith. What mattered in the years to come Rev. Robinson reminded the gathering would be based on the strength and willingness of those gathered at this celebration service. Music was provided by both churches and the hymns were chosen to suit the united celebration. Mr. Alfie McClelland was our organist on this occasion. The hymns were 'God of Grace and God of Glory', 'Why don't you put your trust in Jesus', 'Psalm 121', 'Great is Thy Faithfulness', and 'Lord for the Years'. The choir sang 'Our Father, by whose servants' for the collection. £625 was lifted in aid of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. The collectors were Mr. R. Moffett, Mr. F. Straney, Mr. S. Cleland, Mr. K. Taylor and Mr. J. Strain. We wish to thank the Ministers and members of the congregations which made this service so successful and memorable. We also appreciate the help of the Ballee Choir who attended the practices and were so supportive on the day. Our ladies are to be acknowledged for helping with the catering and our men for their support in

distributing the refreshments and cleaning up after the service. A special word of thanks to Messrs. Ferguson, Moffett, McBride, Strain and Taylor for cleaning the church galleries.



Rev. Harry Robinson & Rev. Dr. David Steers at the Joint Service

Presbyterian Historical Society Visit:

Our Church in Downpatrick warmly welcomed a visit from the members of the Presbyterian Historical Society on the evening of Thursday 17th February 2011. Rev. Dr. David Steers welcomed the gathering and suitably outlined the origins of the Meeting House. Following a prayer Mrs. Betty Taylor, Organist accompanied the hymn 'Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven'.

Rev. Dr. John Nelson, vice-chairman, introduced the speaker Dr. Dónall MacDónaill of Trinity College, Dublin. Dr. MacDónaill a native of Carlingford delivered a most informative talk on Presbyterianism in the area. Using a Power Point presentation the speaker demonstrated the wealth of research he had undertaken to prepare the topic. He outlined the areas he hoped to address and began by revealing the topographical features of the district. He traced the historical implications of the rule from England and the uniqueness of Carlingford Lough. We saw illustrations of many pieces of documentation including old maps, photographs and hand written sermons. Mr. MacDónaill traced the careers of the first Presbyterians and civilians who had influenced the social life of the area. Confirmation of the original church was well featured in maps and photographs. In addition a colleague had researched music to accompany some relevant poetry from the Neill family and sang the pieces in Gaelic.

The evening concluded with refreshments, a visit to the book stall and of course plenty of chat. Once again we are indebted to Mrs. Annabel Cleland for co-ordinating the supper and our generous members who provided and served the food.

Women's World Day of Prayer:

The 1st Presbyterian Non-Subscribing Church in Downpatrick hosted the Women's World Day of Prayer Service on Friday 4th March 2011. There was a good representation of the town's churches both taking part and attending the event.

Each year a different nation prepares a service on a topic which is very relevant to its people. The theme of the service and special booklet entitled 'How many loaves have you?' had been prepared by the Christian Women of Chile. This allowed the congregation both to gain insight into the politics and social issues of Chile and to use the 'Feeding of the five thousand' biblical topic to reflect on the Christian message.

Evidence of the Chilean culture was displayed in the church and the Leader, Commentator, Readers and congregation shared and listened to the issues in a reflective manner.

The guest speaker Rev. Rosalind Taggart from Dunmurry Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church delivered a challenging sermon on how people generally satisfy their human needs for food which are not enough to satisfy the spirit. She made reference to the readings and biblical references and reminded all that it is God who provides and satisfies all our needs.

Those taking part included Mrs. Sue Steers, as the Leader and the readers: Mrs. Margaret Ferguson, Mrs. Una Fitzsimons, Mrs. Eileen Huddleston, Mrs. Barbara Nicholson, Mrs. Jean Rogers, Mrs. Helen Turner, Mrs. Silvana Simioni Shaw, Miss Mary Stewart, and Mrs. Rosalind Wheeler. Mr. Alfie McClelland, our organist, accompanied the united choir.

Our ladies again provided the refreshments and we acknowledge their loyalty and continuing generosity. We also thank Mrs. Margaret Ferguson for her most appropriate floral decorations. Mrs. Annabel Cleland and Mrs. Betty Taylor our representatives and all the committee members for the women's world day of prayer are to be thanked for organising the event.



Special Readers at the Women's World Day of Prayer Service

Hosting the Prayer Room:

During St. Patrick's Week Celebrations a number of our members volunteered to host the Prayer Room which was open for the public to drop in for prayer and medication. We thank our ladies and Rev. & Mrs. Steers for arriving at 8am on Sunday 20th March and helping until our own church service began.



Rev. Dr. D. Steers and Members who hosted the Prayer Room

Rev. Dr. Steers Guest Preacher:

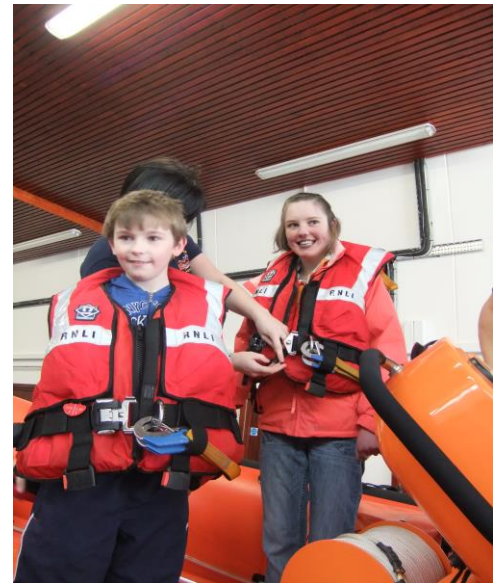
Our Minister Rev. Dr. Steers was the guest preacher in St. Patrick's R. C. Church where during the second week in Lent he had a topical theme and a captive audience. Dr. Steers spoke about the challenges which the disciples had to face. Despite these men being specially chosen Rev. Steers challenged the congregation saying that each and every one of us can contribute to a better world and at the same time improve the quality of our own lives. He reminded the listeners that the Clergy in Downpatrick had taken the lead by forming a united group to further the work of their individual congregations and the Christian community in Downpatrick. Rev. Dr. Steers concluded by saying that we have no need to look for reward or recognition if we give service to God.

Visit to Portaferry RNLI Lifeboat Station:

The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church Downpatrick had hosted a joint service in January with Ballee and Clough Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Churches and Downpatrick and Ardglass Presbyterian Churches. On Saturday 9th April 2011 representatives of these churches visited the Portaferry RNLI Centre where they presented a cheque for £650 from the church collection. Everyone was able to get aboard the Blue Peter Craft, to try on the equipment and tour the premises. The Commodore and his staff explained the working of the station and following refreshments everyone was given souvenirs. It was most informative to know how the donation could help the work of these brave volunteers.



Members at the Visit to the Lifeboat Centre



James and Robyn test the equipment



Joy, Marion and Myrtle on the Ferry

Easter Service:

The Easter Service in Downpatrick on Sunday, 24th April 2011 was conducted by the Rev. Dr. David Steers. In his Young People's message Dr. Steers reminded the scholars that Easter was traditionally a time for revelling and for games. The Minister made reference to the many traditions which have now grown up around the festival and he relayed the unusual tradition which the people celebrate such as those in the village of Hamilton. Nearly all the acts of celebration are symbolic of the death and resurrection of Christ. Rev. Steers noted that whatever the traditions all these festivities, allow us to be thankful and joyful for the message of Easter.

Dr. Steers continued his Easter message in his sermon based on the lessons from Psalm 30 and Mark Ch15 v33.38. The Minister traced the pre-Christian celebrations which heralded the time of spring followed in time by the Passover Celebrations and the Last Supper. Rev. Steers remarked that Mark's story of the risen Christ, although ending abruptly clearly highlighted the women's alarm at finding the empty tomb but also notes their excitement at the message of the continuation of the living Father and a desire to return with the news to Galilee. Just as in Psalm 30, *'weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.'* As Rev. Steers made reference to the thoughts of several persons including Dr. Wakefield and Michael Ward. The latter comparing the story of Pandora to the opening of the tomb when despite all being lost hope remained. This hope was unleashed on an unsuspecting world and is continually being revised. People and situations can change for the better and the message this Easter was to 'go fourth with hope and faith'.

The organist was Mr. Alfie McClelland and the hymns: 'Jesus Christ is risen today', 'There is a green hill far away', 'The day of resurrection' and 'The strife is o'er'. We thank Miss Marion Moffett, Sunday School Teacher for providing Easter eggs for the children and along with Mrs. Annabel Cleland for arranging such an enjoyable Beetle Drive on Wednesday 27th April 2011. Thanks also to the parents for their support, supper and prizes.

Spring Communion Service:

On Sunday 1st May 2011 Rev. Dr. David Steers conducted the spring Communion Service. Using the Royal Wedding celebrations to illustrate our ongoing desire to eat together on many symbolic occasions Dr. Steers used the feeding of the 5,000 as told in all four gospels but with reference to Mark Ch 6 v30-44. Rev. Steers reminded the congregation that Jesus excluded none from his meals and the Jews like all of us find a spiritual togetherness in sitting and eating together. The story of feeding the five thousand demonstrates the selfless act of sharing. In the breaking of the bread Christ linked the moment to the historical Passover Feast and what was to become the Last Supper. Dr. Steers developed the importance of this sacrament and how God is to be found in the hearts of those who love him and not just inside the church building. What emerges from a communion service, the minister added was what is important just as in the feeding of the five thousand:- the need for food, with help given when it is needed and yet all those needs surpassed by God and our spiritual needs. Dr. Steers finished his sermon by pronouncing the Invitation to join together around the common tables in the aisles, just as our forefathers had done for the past 300 years. One could not fail to sense the significance of this unique communion service.

Mrs. Betty Taylor, organist accompanied the hymns: 'Awake, arise! Lift up thy voice', 'Bread of heaven', 'Come, risen Lord' and 'O God, in whom we live and move'.

We appreciate and thank the Elders who assisted the Minister, Mrs. Margaret Ferguson for yet again providing the port and our gentlemen who set-up and cleared away the communion tables and benches. Without these willing workers such a service could not take place.



Tables laid for the Communion Service

Special Service to Celebrate the Tercentenary of the Meeting House:

On a sun drenched but blustery Sunday 8th May 2011 a large congregation of members, friends and visitors assembled in the 1711 constructed Meeting House in Downpatrick to celebrate 300 years of continual worship by many generations of Presbyterians.

Rev. Dr. David Steers conducted the service and following the Introit 'Holy, Holy, Holy!' by the visiting choir the Minister in his opening words especially welcomed the Moderator of the General Synod and Dromore Minister Rt. Rev. Samuel J. Peden FIPurM, CPM; the guest Preacher Rev. Dr. John W. Nelson BA, BD. Clerk of the Presbytery of Antrim and minister of Raloo; the Clergy of the Denomination and the District, and Mr. E. O'Neill, the Chairman of the Down District Council. The evidence of being a liberal denomination was evident by the cross-section of those attending.

During the service the Donaghadee Male Voice Choir, Accompanied by Mr. I. Black and Directed by Mr. R. Wilson MBE performed a number of items including: 'Every time I hear the spirit', 'I need Thee every hour', 'I hear a voice that calls me to him', 'I am coming home', and a medley of 'Let there be peace on earth', 'Swing low sweet chariot' and 'Amen, Amen'. The congregation had no hesitation in applauding these highly enjoyable items.

The congregational hymns: 'We love the place, O God', 'Praise to the Lord', 'Guide me, O thou great Jehovah' and 'Our Father, by whose servants' were accompanied by our Organist Mrs. Betty Taylor. We thank our organist, and members from Ballee and Downpatrick who made up the combined choir.

The Reading from Isaiah Ch. 51 v. 1-8 was taken by Mr. Stephen McMullan and that from James Ch. 1 v16-25 by Miss Anna Ferguson.

Rt. Rev. S. Peden dedicated a new plaque Commemorating the Ministers of the Congregation. In doing so Rev. Peden paid homage to the service of the 23 ministers listed and thanked the members of the congregation who felt it fitting to pay their respects in this manner. The congregation was asked to stand for the ceremony. Following this Mr. Peden pronounced the Prayers of Intercession in which he appealed for the needs of the community both near and far.

Rev. Dr. J. Nelson began his sermon by noting that who and what we are has been shaped by where we are in place and time with up to 16 generations in the present building and as many as 20 generations since the founding of the congregation in the 1640's.

In each generation, said Dr. Nelson, the Ministers who led their people had endeavoured to explain the Christian faith, to baptise, to marry and to bury the members. Rev. Nelson explained the difficulties of ministering in both political and religious turbulence. He set the scene for the eventual erection of the Meeting house by 'painting' a montage of the early preachers. How John Fleming had ministered in both Ballee and Downpatrick, travelling into the districts and eventually being ousted. After a gap of ten years when many ministers fled to Scotland the congregation called Rev. Archibald Young who also retired in 1689. Increased wealth and church attendance during this time led the congregation to think of a new building. Ballee had already erected its own building and during the ministry of Rev. Thomas Jackson settlement closer to the town was a possibility. In 1710 the Stream Street site was acquired from the Southwell Estate and by 1711 the present building was opened. Apart for the roof which was upgraded possibly from thatch to slate in the following century, the original structure, one of very few has remained intact. This T shaped meeting house is now an A listed historical building. We know the minister's room and vestry were added between 1720 and 1729 at which time it was likely the stairs to the east and west galleries were enclosed.

Dr. Nelson informed the gathering that in 1714 the church doors had been nailed up but due to the death of Queen Ann the building was reopened. It is understood the building was never again closed other than for restoration purposes when alternative venues were used for the services.

With the arrival of Rev. Thomas Nevin began three generations of his family and throughout all the Non-Subscription challenged the congregation remained loyal to their minister. This liberal attitude of our members has survived to this day. Rev. Nelson recalled stories from the everyday life of Rev. S.C. Nelson who ministered for 56 years. His diaries recorded graphic pictures of his duties between 1835 and 1837. And said Dr. J. Nelson so it is today for Rev. Dr. Steers when the congregation meets to worship and crosses the border of time and faith. The members were congratulated on reaching this historical moment.

The celebrations concluded with refreshments and our members are thanked for their kindness in providing and serving these. All who helped in the preparation of this event is rewarded by its great success. The Committee

also acknowledges the attendance of so many of our denominational ministers and several who sent apologies and donations. The collection in aid of church funds was in excess of £1,000 and we sincerely thank everyone for their generosity.



Rev. Dr. D. Steers, Rt. Rev. S. Peden & Rev. Dr. J. Nelson

Marriage: Morgan/Moffett:

Stephen Moffett and Catherine Morgan were married in Downpatrick NSP Church on 13th May, 2011, the service was conducted by Rev Dr David Steers. Fiona Carson, sister of the bride, carried out the duties of maid of honour, the bridesmaids were Lindsay Holland and Charlene Rooney, friends of the bride. The best man was the groom's friend, Paul Shannon and groomsmen were his brother Adam Moffett and friend Stephen Dobbin. The reception was held in Downpatrick Cricket Club and the couple honeymooned in Bali. Stephen is the grandson of our Senior Elder Mr. R. Moffett. We congratulate the couple and wish them long life and happiness together.



Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Moffett following their wedding

Church Annual General Meeting:

On Tuesday 24th May 2011 the AGM was held in Downpatrick. Rev. Dr. Steers took the chair and convened the meeting.

Rev. Dr. D. Steers opened his report by making very positive references to the church's worship which was often tested in its early history but in its Tercentenary Year, its continuing celebrations were appropriate for honouring the struggles of our forebears.

It was on this site, reported the Minister that Thomas Nevin and the congregation began to flourish in a building fit for its purpose. Dr. Steers noted that just as our predecessors could not predict the future 300 years neither could we envisage the world in 2311 but we are fitting guardians to whatever change might develop. The Minister congratulated the church's office bearers and members who are so professional and committed to the good of the church.

In her report the Secretary recorded all the special services over the year, the family bereavements, the success of the Sunday school and the fund raising events. The Minister and his wife were thanked for all their efforts on behalf of Downpatrick members.

The Treasurer presented a graphic report of the church's finances had maintained extremely healthy funds. Mrs. M McBride reported on some very generous bequests, and donations on behalf of members who passed away during the year. She remarked that these gifts were testaments to the departed faith and love for their church. Other investments being prudently invested were doing well. The Minister remarked that Mrs. McBride's report was an exceptional report and evidence of outstanding book-keeping.

Miss M. Moffett on behalf of the Sunday School reminded the meeting of the excellent working scholars who had continued to excel in the examinations and in their participation in the church's calendar.

The Elders, Committee and Office bearers were re-elected and the elected Mrs. B. Taylor as a new Elder and Mrs. R. Neill as a Committee Member.

Mr. S. McBride reported on the large number of maintenance issues which he had arranged on behalf of the property.

The Elders and members sanctioned the Minister's salary increase, in September, already discussed with Ballee and Clough. Mr. R. Moffett presented Dr. Steers with a cheque as a token of appreciation on behalf of the Downpatrick members. This was what has now become the norm. It was a most positive AGM with many issues being discussed and decided upon. We thank our members for their attendance and the generous supper which concluded the evening.

Annual Children's Day:

The Annual Children's Day Service was held in Downpatrick on Sunday 12th June 2011 and was conducted by Rev. Dr. David Steers. Continuing with the tercentenary year's celebrations of the church, the adults and children dressed in period costumes covering the 300 year span from 1711 when as Dr. Steers reminded the gathering Rev. Thomas Nevin was ordained and installed in the same building. Today our ancestors would have not only been familiar with the dress of the congregation but also the virtually intact building. It was a joyful occasion and one which we hope will be remembered for a long time.

The Sunday School Scholars processional hymn was 'Jesus loves me' and following this assembled at the front of the church the young people led the rest of the service. Prayers and readings were linked together with hymns for which the pupils had won denominational awards. These included 'Daniel was a man of God', 'At the name of Jesus', 'One more step', and a Children's Hymn written by Rev. David Gordon, our minister 1871-1893. The children took up the collection on behalf of the Multiple Sclerosis Society following which Dr. Steers presented the prizes for attendance and examinations. Other congregational hymns sung were 'Seek ye first' and 'God make my life a little light'.

Rev. Steers thanked the Teachers Miss Marion Moffett and Mrs. Annabel Cleland , the organist Mrs. Betty Taylor and all who had helped the children achieve such successes in the denominational examinations. Prizes were won as follows: Laura Neill 3rd, Megan Neill 2nd, Eileen Neill 1st x 2 , Rachel Neill 1st, Robyn Nixon 3rd, Robert Neill 2nd, Jennifer Cleland 2nd, Choir items 1st x2 and 2nd. Special Awards 1st House Cup for Most Promising Choir, Michael Richardson Memorial Award for best freehand drawing of painting.(Eileen Neill) and Domestic Mission Award for best entry on the Denomination. (Eileen & Rachel Neill).



Congregation in costume June 2011

Members on Children's Day



Rev. Dr. David Steers dressed as Rev. Dr. Steers June 2011

Rev. Dr. D. Steers on Children's Day



Rev. Dr. Steers and Organist Mrs. B. Taylor

Christening Straney:



Ethan Jak at his Christening

It was also fitting that Rev. Dr. Steers undertook the christening of baby Ethan Jak supported by his parents Leanne and Keith Straney and his older brother Zak, and watched by his grandparents. Rev. Steers reminded the gathering that this was an occasion of thanksgiving, recognition and dedication which symbolised all that we stood for in our Christian belief. He welcomed the baby and reminded his parents and the members of their duty to this new life. The christening hymn was 'To Thee, almighty Father'. We join with our Minister in wishing this infant a long and happy life.

Illness of Minister:

The members of Downpatrick congregation were most perturbed to learn of the sudden illness of our very popular and treasured Minister Rev. Dr. David Steers on the eve of his departure on holidays. We are all fully united in sending him our very best wishes for his recuperation and his return to full health. He remains in all our thoughts and prayers.

We also take the opportunity of thanking the ministers of the denomination who at this anxious time have offered their support both to the Rev. Dr. Steers and to the three churches of his joint charge.

Treasure Hunt:

The locals in the countryside of Lecale must have noticed an increase in the traffic around their usually quiet country lanes on the evening of Saturday 16th July 2011. The reason being that for the first time since 1962 the members and supporters of Downpatrick Church assembled, at the popular venue of the Lakeside Inn, Ballydugan, for a car Treasure Hunt.

Despite the recent inclement weather the participants were not put off, by mid-afternoon the skies cleared and for the remainder of the evening it was dry overhead. By 6.30pm the engines were revved and like exam entrants there was an air of both excitement and expectation as one by one the thirty-five cars with their one hundred and fifty occupants sped from the car park clutching their question sheet of thirty clues as well as general knowledge and 'bring back' items. For the next three hours over some nineteen miles adults and children scrambled to find the answers before returning to the Lakeside for an ordered 'chippy' supper.

The yard of this historical pub, once a staging post quickly echoed to the sounds of laughter and to the music of Arthur Gibson and his friends who played accordions and percussion instruments.

This had not been organised as a fund raising occasion but nevertheless a ballot assisted the cost of the overheads including the use of the Ballynahinch Lions marquee which received a donation towards charity. A pleasing sum of money was raised for church funds. Yet another most successful venture in this Tercentenary Anniversary year!

The members are to be congratulated for all their efforts in setting up for the evening and helping with the organisation. We sincerely thank and congratulate the Lakeside proprietors Margaret and Geoffrey Ferguson for their planning, their hard work and for the use of their premises on the evening.



Musicians at the Treasure Hunt



Mrs. Myrtle McBride sets off a car

5th Sunday Service July 2011:

Ballee church hosted the fifth Sunday in the month on 31st July 2011 when Clough and Downpatrick joined with them in a most appetising buffet salad lunch followed by sweets coffee and biscuits. We wish to thank Ballee for instigating and hosting the event. Thanks is also extended to all our members for their generous support with food items, donations and their attendance. Thank you Annabel and Myrtle for your extra help. The large sum of over £1,300 was raised for the Moderator's Appeal!

In our church we are looking forward to Saturday 10th September between 10am and 4pm and on Sunday 11th September between 2pm and 4pm when we will welcome visitors to the European Heritage Open Days. A display of our church history should add to the interest of visiting historians.



Buffet Lunch in Ballee following United Service

European Heritage Open Days September 2011:

The Downpatrick Church was open on Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th September 2011 as part of the European Heritage Open Days scheme. The visitors attending all remarked on the interesting and original features of the Tercentenary building. The history and anecdotal stories also gave much pleasure. A display of a variety of our records allowed everyone to see the wealth of existing documents which have survived over the years.

The secretary wishes to thank Mrs. M. Ferguson, Mr. & Mrs. S. McBride, Mrs. R. Neill and Ms. C. Nitschike who gave of their time to assist with the event.



Historical Display at the European Heritage Open Days

Harvest Thanksgiving Service 2011:

The Downpatrick Church celebrated its Annual Harvest Thanksgiving Service on Sunday 2nd October 2011 when a good congregation of members and friends were delighted to see our Minister Rev. Dr. David Steers recovering from his recent illness. Dr. Steers greeted everyone and pronounced the opening prayers. He welcomed the guest Minister Rev. Paul Reid from our church in Larne and the Baillies Mills Accordion Band.

Mrs. Betty Taylor our organist accompanied the Tercentenary, joint Choir in the introit, 'God who madest all for man,' and the chosen congregational hymns:- 'Come ye thankful people come', 'The God of harvest praise', 'To Thee O Lord our hearts we raise', and 'Go work in my vineyard'.

Rev. Reid took his lessons from Ecclesiastes Ch3 and Mark Ch6. The Preacher opened his address by reminding the gathering that it was appropriate to come together to give thanks to God who promised that, 'seed time and harvest would not fail.' Coming from a rural background himself Rev. Reid showed great empathy with all the seasonal duties which culminated in the gathering of the harvest. He told the listeners that amongst the stories of his youth in Sunday school the 'Parable of the Sower' had great meaning. We were told that the visual image of the farmers in the fields enabled Jesus to underline his parable.

Like the sower, said the Minister, we too have many obstacles to overcome. Only careful preparation would lead to a successful yield. Those who listened to Christ did not all understand the analogy he was making with their spiritual life and so he went on to explain. Rev. Reid was sure that our congregations had sown the seeds but there were still many who had no time for God, quite happy to forget the God of harvest, or to say thank you. We should reflect God's love and tell those around us.

The Baillies Mills Accordion Band played a number of popular items at intervals throughout the service and the congregation responded very favourably to their performance including: 'Give me oil', 'Because he lives', 'There is a river', 'What a friend', 'Lord of the years' and many more.

Our members are to be sincerely thanked for all their efforts; time and gifts which resulted in a thoroughly enjoyable festive event. We acknowledge our ladies who provided refreshments of their usual high quality and the harvest collection which was most generous considering the charitable collections already supported all year.



Harvest Thanksgiving Arrangements

Wedding: Cleland/ Herron:

On Friday 14th October 2011 Rev. Dr. David Steers undertook the wedding of Beverly Ann Cleland and Samuel Jonathan Herron. The bride's dress had an elegant bodice and short bolero of lace with the design repeated on the hem of the full length gown. Beverly is the daughter of Annabel and Samuel Cleland, a family with several generations of members of the Downpatrick Church. The bridesmaids, who wore moss green coloured gowns, were Nicola Cleland, Jennifer Cleland and Stephanie Swail, and the flower girl Ellen Herron. The best man was Gary Bailey and the groomsmen Richard Hanna and Darren Herron. The ushers were Gareth Crozier and Robert Cleland. The gentlemen wore brown suits and moss green cravats. As the names suggest this was a real family event and guests included Beverly's two grandmothers. Several of her aunts used their artistic talent in arranging the flowers and preparing and stationery.

Dr. Steers in his address reminded the gathering of the importance of the marriage ceremony and his lessons were very appropriate for the occasion. Mr. Alfie McClelland organist accompanied the hymns: 'Make me a channel of your peace', and 'Praise my soul, the King of heaven.'

The reception was held in the Burrendale Hotel, Newcastle and the honeymoon included touring in Europe and a Mediterranean Cruise. We wish Beverly and Sam every happiness and good health for their future together.



Mr. & Mrs S. Herron

Baptism -McKee:

On Sunday 23rd October 2011 Rev. Dr. David Steers undertook the baptism of Bethany Ellen (Beth) McKee infant daughter of Mrs. Hannah (née Kelly) and Colin McKee. Hannah's family have long standing connections with the church and both sets of Grandparents, along with many family friends and well-wishers attended the service. Hannah's sister Mrs. Stacy Beckett stood as Godparent and the christening hymn was 'Our Father whose Creative Love'. Mrs. Betty Taylor accompanied the hymns.

Dr. Steer's sermon appropriately reminded the congregation that attending church was to get to know God better, to further our own spiritual needs and not just to please God.

We wish Hannah, Colin and Beth God's spiritual guidance and earthly protection in the years to come.



The McKee Christening

5th Sunday United Service:

On Sunday 30th October 2011 Rev. Dr. D. Steers conducted the joint service for Ballee, Clough and Downpatrick in the latter's building.

In his children's address Rev. Steer's talked about the desire of all nations to work for international co-operation, nothing new as the Book of Kings in the Old Testament aspired to this too. He made reference to the Statue of Liberty Enlightening the World as a gift of friendship from the people of France to the people of the United States and it stood in New York Harbour as a universal symbol of freedom and democracy.

Dr. Steers' lessons were taken from Genesis Ch18 and Matthew Ch15 and he used the contents to aid the theme of his sermon. Rev. Steers talked about the freedom of our denomination and that of Christian fellowship. He asked where we found God and demonstrated that God was to be found in the most unsuspecting places. Using the story of Sarah's promise of a child we were reminded that nothing was impossible for God. The Minister developed the theme of how Jesus rebuked those who tried to dictate who and what Christians should believe with elitist groups evolving in the church. He made many efforts to free us from the rigid doctrines of men. Women and children were noticeably excluded in society and as recorded in Matthew Ch15 Christ overturned these ideas by associating with every class of person. He demonstrated that God was not just found in a religious

setting but in the ordinary and every day. God's kingdom is with us and we must open our hearts and welcome it in.

Mr. Alfie McClelland accompanied the hymns: 'Lord, thy word abideth', 'What a friend we have in Jesus', 'guide me, o thou great Jehovah', and 'Thou hidden love of God'.

History of Downpatrick Church Book Launch:

On Tuesday 1st November 2011 the Downpatrick Church proudly launched its book containing many records and photographs of its history, its ministers and members. The ladies had organised a wine and cheese evening to welcome the visitors to the event.

Jack Steers delighted us with his fanfare to open the event and announce the sale of the books. In acting as Chairman Rev. Dr. David Steers expressed his thanks to the secretary Mary Stewart for compiling the book. Louise Steers presented Mary with a special flowering plant to mark the occasion. Rev. Steers noted on how important it was to record the history of the church in this its tercentenary year. The Minister reminded the gathering of the real importance of the Downpatrick building; almost original in architecture, with a graveyard of significance and an example of people who had striven to uphold their freedom of belief. He also thanked all his members for their help in providing documents for the book and for organising the evening.

Dr. Steers then introduced Rev. Dr. John Nelson, the minister of Ballycarry and Raloo and noted denominational historian. Dr. Nelson spoke about Rev. Thomas Nevin the first minister in the present building, his pulpit and subsequent trials and tribulations within the denomination. Rev. Nelson went on to highlight many interesting anecdotes recorded in the book. Dr. Nelson explained that as this was a compendium of original documents from many sources it should be an asset to anyone researching both church and family history. He commended the church on undertaking this task.

We sincerely thank our organist Mr. Alfie McClelland who set a most relaxing atmosphere by playing music throughout the evening.

Everyone who worked tirelessly and with loyalty to ensure this event was the success it was must be thanked and congratulated. Many guests remarked on how the congregation positively uses its building. Books are still available for purchase.



Members at the Book Launch

Autumn Communion:

The members of Downpatrick are most grateful that Rev. Dr. Steers has been able to officiate at all our special events this month and we wish him continued good health. Dr. Steers' duties included our November communion when he spoke about 'What does it mean to follow Jesus?' The Minister reading from Luke Ch4 v16 summarised Christ's declaration of his calling. Rev. Steers noted that our images of childhood our backgrounds and our own images all go to forming our own understanding of Jesus. Dr. Steers made a number of references to those who have written at length about Christ. In particular he made reference to 'Christ and Culture' by Richard Niebuhr who declared his understanding of Christ in five categories. The Minister summarised several Biblical references before reciting the Invitation to join him around the communion tables. Probably one of the most significant quotes from Mark Ch3 v35 '*For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother,*' encouraged the members to attend communion. The message was concluded with, '*What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*' Our thanks are extended to our Organist Mrs. Betty Taylor for selecting and accompanying the communion hymns. We also appreciate and thank the Elders who assisted the Minister, Mrs. Margaret Ferguson for providing the port and our gentlemen who set-up and cleared away the communion furniture.

Remembrance Day Service:

On Sunday 13th November 2011 Mrs. Sue Steers conducted the Downpatrick Church's Remembrance Service. The service began with Jack Steers playing 'The Last Post', then the two minutes' silence, the Binyon quotation spoken by Mrs. Steers and followed by Jack playing 'Reveille'. We thank Jack sincerely for his most moving and poignant music. The poppy wreath had already been placed beneath the 1925 War Memorial. Mrs. Steers' lessons were taken from Isaiah Ch 2 and John Ch1. In the children's address the preacher quoted from Binyon's famous poem '*They shall not grow old.*' She talked about the other 16 war poets remembered on a memorial in Westminster Abbey and how their ability to write about the traumas of war have left us a lasting record of the times endured by those who sacrificed all for us.

In her sermon Mrs. Steers reminded the congregation that such an annual event gave us all the opportunity to pay homage to those who fought in wars past and present. She recalled the origins of many of the traditions now associated with this event, including the wearing of the poppy, the two minutes silence, the symbolism of the grave of the Unknown Soldier in Westminster Abbey and the wreath laying services. All of which remain poignant as recent Middle East conflicts remind us daily of the sacrifice of those who never return and those who bear the scars of war. Mrs. Steers continued her theme by making reference to the well-known words from Isaiah and John when peace will come in a heavenly kingdom and how warring situations have led to so many peace treaties. She concluded by quoting from 'Oh Jesus Christ' by Wilfred Owen. Mr. Alfie McClelland, organist, accompanied the hymns: 'O God, our help', 'Judge Eternal', 'Eternal Father' and 'This is my song'.

Tercentenary Dinner First Presbyterian (NS) Church, Downpatrick

On Friday 18th November 2011 members and friends of the First Presbyterian (Non-Subscribing) Church, Downpatrick continued with their Tercentenary Celebrations by having a dinner in the Burrendale Hotel, Newcastle.

The Moderator the Right Reverend Samuel J. Peden opened the proceedings by welcoming everyone and congratulating the church on its celebration year. This he followed by reading a letter from the church's Minister Rev. Dr. David Steers who, following an operation, was unable to be present. In the letter Dr. Steers added his congratulations and good wishes.

After the meal there was the traditional cutting of the cakes which had been made by Mrs. Myrtle McBride and Mrs. Wendy Taylor. Both cakes were most artistically decorated by Mrs. Margaret Ferguson who had depicted both the church and the denominational logo in icing. The ladies were acknowledged with flowers presented by Eileen, Rachel and Megan Neill.

The cakes were cut by The Moderator Rt. Rev. Peden, Mrs, Renée Cleland, Mrs. Myrtle McBride, Mr. George Strain, and Mrs. Margaret McMullan.

The church Treasurer Mrs. McBride then surprised the secretary Mary Stewart by thanking her for the work she had undertaken during the year. Mr. George Strain, Elder was most complimentary in acknowledging the secretary's role and presented her, on behalf of everyone, with a delightful Border Fine Arts ornament.

The evening continued with a trip down memory lane, thanks to Mr. Jim Morrison who had edited a number of cine tapes originally shot in the 1950 and 1960 by his Aunt Miss Florence Morrison. The updated DVD began with a special dinner in 1967 to celebrated 25 years ministry of the then minister Rev. J. Radcliffe. This was followed with the re-opening of the church in 1967 after major renovations. Finally there were several reels of Children's Day Services and summer Excursions. Many members at the dinner were able to see shots of their grandparents, parents and themselves as children. These tapes had not been viewed in over 40 years and are a wonderful church archive.

Mr. Robert Moffett, the Representative Elder brought the evening to an end by thanking all for their attendance.



Cutting the Anniversary Cakes

Photo 1 Moderator Rt. Rev. S. Peden & Mrs. R. Cleland.

Photo 2 Mrs. M. McBride, Mr. G. Strain and Mrs. M. McMullan.

Table Quiz:

On Saturday 27th November 2011 the church held its Annual Table Quiz in the Lakeside Inn, Ballydugan. Hosted by Mr. & Mrs. Geoffrey Ferguson a large gathering of members, friends and local quiz addicts enjoyed ten rounds of questions compiled and asked by Mr. Arthur Gibson. After each round Arthur delivered the running scores which were tallied by his wife Anne, that is, until the last two rounds when the participants were kept in suspense. At the half-way stage a supper prepared by the ladies was enjoyed while ballot tickets were sold. When the 'final scores were counted it was discovered that three teams had tied so the Question Master had to undertake several tie-breaker questions. The final results were 1st 'Inchworms', 2nd 'The Chieftains', 3rd 'Wobbly Table'. The Ballots were won by: 1st Geraldine Smyth, 2nd Davina Fryer, 3rd Joan Gordon, and 4th Sammy McBride. There were also many other winners. The evening was enjoyed by all and after costs £534 was raised for church funds.

We acknowledge all who in any way supported the event and we especially thank our hosts, Margaret and Geoffrey Ferguson, the Question Master and his wife Arthur and Anne Gibson, Our Treasurer Myrtle McBride and our catering co-ordinator Annabel Cleland.



'Inchworms' The Winning Team at the Table Quiz

Annual United Candlelight Service:

On Wednesday 7th December 2011 members of Ballee and Clough Congregations united with the members in Downpatrick for the group's Annual Candlelight Service which Rev. Dr. Steers had compiled. All were thanked for their attendance, following which, prayers and lessons taken from the Old and New Testaments, were interspersed with ten carols accompanied by the Organist Mr. Alfie McClelland. The readers were: Jill Kelly, Tiarna Kelly, Rachel Neill, Amanda Ramsey, Helen Wilson, Doreen Chambers, Darren Ramsey, Robert Cleland, Avril Burgess Myrtle McBride and Mary Stewart. All were thanked for their valued participation. To complete the festive spirit some Anniversary Cake and sweets were distributed.

We are indebted to our talented members who decorated the building so tastefully and particularly acknowledge Mr. Jackie Strain for donating and erecting the new Christmas Tree, Mrs. Helen Wilson for providing the numerous candlesticks and Mrs. Rosemary Neill for the berried holy.

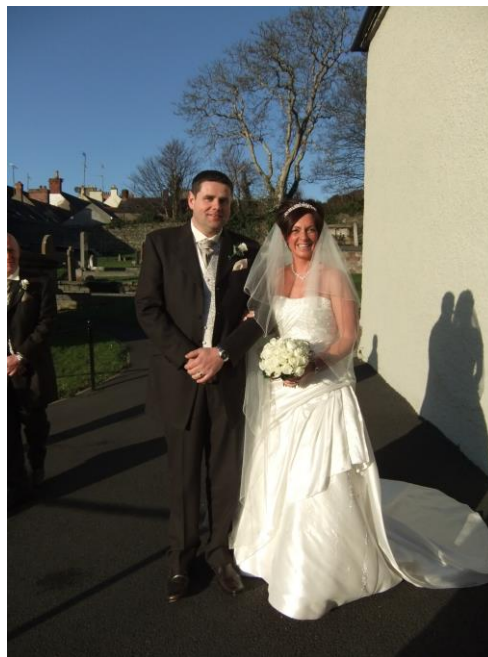


Candlelight in the Church

Marriage: Kelly/Murphy

On Friday 9th December 2011 Rev. Dr. David Steers undertook the marriage ceremony for Sharon Kelly, eldest daughter of Thelma and James Kelly and Wilson Murphy son for Rachael and Samuel Murphy. The bride wore a long, off the shoulders beaded gown and the Matron of Honour, her sister Hannah McKee was dressed in chocolate brown to match the gentlemen of the wedding party. The Best Man was Stephen Hall, Ushers were Darren Evans and Simon Beckett. The pageboys were Jake and Sam Hamilton and the Flower Girl Rebekah Evans. Readings were taken by Sylvia Gatt and Mandy Evans. Mr. Alfie McClelland, church organist accompanied the hymns: 'We pledge to one another' and 'Love divine'.

Following the ceremony the reception was held in Brownlow House, Lurgan. The honeymoon will be spent in Vegas followed by a cruise. We congratulate Sharon and Wilson and wish them every happiness for the future.



Mrs. Sharon and Wilson Murphy following their wedding ceremony

Annual Christmas Party:

The children of the Sunday School in Downpatrick were joined by a number of friends at their Annual Christmas Party which was held on Saturday, 17th December 2011. Many of the traditional and boisterous party games were played and for some never experienced before! A scrumptious tea was provided by the parents and we thank Mrs. Annabel Cleland for co-ordinating the eats. This was followed by a visit from Father Christmas and we thank Mr. Tom Edgar for ensuring he arrived on time. A very special thank you to Miss Marion Moffett who made sure Santa brought suitable presents. The church sincerely acknowledges the dedication of our teachers Marion and Annabel and the support of our parents.

Annual Carol Service:

In Downpatrick the Annual Carol Service was held on Sunday 18th December 2011. Using the prepared hymn sheet Mrs. Betty Taylor, organist, accompanied the congregational carols and the children of the Sunday School when they sang: 'Away in a Manger' and 'Joy to the World' and their readings which were followed by 'We wish you a merry Christmas'. We thank Mrs. Taylor for also arranging the readers including: Mrs. Carol Nixon, Mr. Kenneth Taylor, Miss Alex Cleland, Miss Megan Neill, Miss Anna Ferguson and Mrs. Sue Steers.

The Carols and Readings were linked by Mrs. Steers who also recited a Christmas poem and pronounced the Benediction. Everyone was delighted to welcome back the Rev. Dr. David Steers who delivered his own message and thanks to all those who participated in the service.

Mrs. Myrtle McBride, church treasurer had purchased and wrapped a number of Christmas presents which were distributed and delivered to our senior members and those who had experienced a difficult year. The Rev. Dr. Steers was presented with a cheque as the church's gift to him. We sincerely thank Mrs. McBride for all her hard work and thoughtfulness at this time.

The Christmas Day Service was this year hosted by Clough Church. We acknowledge our members who undertook readings on the day.

So ends our Tercentenary Anniversary in which the above celebrations resulted in many hours of pleasure when the members both recalled history and made some for themselves. In years to come this brief outline of events will enable future generations to appreciate the historical roots of the church and the participation of their family members.



Special Flower Arrangement



Our 300 Year old Church in 2011