

April 2023

THE bulletin



“He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.
Come and see the place where he lay.”

Matthew 28:6

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Dear Friends,

Thank you for all the faith, service and generosity which you have shown over many years as together we have faced many challenges and opportunities as we have sought to follow Christ and serve the community.



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As you will learn as you read on in this bulletin we are once again facing one of those times of challenge. Following this letter you will be able to read about the significant financial pressures that we are facing as a congregation.

In order to meet this challenge we need as God's people to do several things: the first is that we need to try and reduce, where possible, our current costs in Railway Street. Secondly, in order to fix this problem in the longer term we need to see a marked increase in giving to the Free Will Offering. Finally, in seeking to do that I am asking you as disciples of Jesus to re-evaluate your current giving.

While we have not taken up a physical offering on a Sunday since before Covid we still need to remember that our giving to the Lord's work is still an essential element of our worship. Let me highlight three important aspects when it comes to our giving:

1. Grace

Our giving is a response to the grace that God extends to us. We cannot consider Calvary and, at the same time, lay down qualifications about our own giving. We cannot be grudging or reluctant and sing with sincerity, 'Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.'

While we can never match the extent of God's giving we should seek to respond to the grace God has given us through our actions and our attitudes.

Giving should never be a matter of guilt. None of us would like to receive a gift that is given grudgingly. God is no different. We should give generously and willingly. Giving is not a loss, it is an investment in the Kingdom of God.

The Bible says, *"You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor."* 2 Corinthians 8:9

2. Place

The mission of our church is, **'Following Christ, Serving the Community.'** We are called to share the good news of Jesus with our community, to reach out to a world in need and to make disciples of all nations. We can all play our part in this vision by giving of our time and talents, but we can also have an important impact on the mission of the church through our giving. When more is given, more is possible.

The Bible teaches us that a church whose members sow generously can expect a rich harvest. There are many worthy causes for our money to go to but the foremost place of our individual giving should be the local church to which we belong.

Jesus said, *"Much is required from the person to whom much is given; much more is required from the person to whom much more is given."* (Luke 12:48)

3. Pace

Over 2300 verses in the Bible speak about money, wealth and possessions and around a third of Jesus' parables relate to it.

This is a vital part of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Our giving should be planned and regular in addition to one off projects at specific times of need. **We should regularly evaluate our level of giving in relation to our income.**

Our giving should be proportionate to our resources. The Old Testament teaches the principle of tithing and this is a good starting base for New Testament generosity. Tithing means simply giving away at least 10% of our income to the Kingdom of God. That still leaves us with 90% which is much more than most people in this world have to begin with.

The Bible says, *"Giving should be a priority, regular and sustained – set something aside for God on the first day of each week."* 1 Corinthians 16:2

I would humbly ask you to re-evaluate your giving at the present time, just as I have done, and to consider whether you can increase your giving to help us meet the current financial challenge.

One thing I have learned during my time in Railway Street is that as a congregation we have never yet failed to give to meet a need when that need has been identified. I have every confidence we will do the same at this present time to bring honour to our church's Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

EASTER 2023

On a positive note you will find in this bulletin details for all our Easter Services. This season is the heart and centre of our Christian faith as we solemnly remember the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ and then as we celebrate his victorious resurrection.

We have a full package of events happening from Wednesday 5th April through to Easter Sunday, including the return for the first time in four years of our Easter Dawn Service at Wallace Park Band Stand at 6:30am.

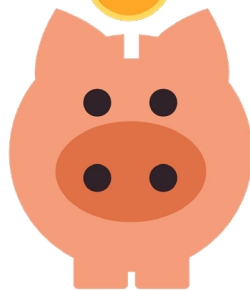
I do hope that we will all make it a priority to take time over the Easter week to meet together and worship our Lord and Saviour.

Yours in His service,

Michael Davidson



Railway Street Church Finances



There is a saying in the countryside that it is better to fix the roof while the sun is shining.

Unfortunately we have developed a significant hole in our main operating account (known as the No:1 Account) with our expenditure having exceeded our income in 2022 by a little over £30,000 so we need to take action to “fix our roof” now before the situation deteriorates further and so requires more drastic action to address.

How did we get to where we are?

If we go back a decade, our No:1 Account held a comfortable surplus with this being due to a combination of faithful giving to FWO and staff costs that primarily consisted of those related to the minister and to a part time youth worker. This surplus increased substantially during the vacancy in 2013 – 2015 so that our No:1 account was sitting with a surplus in excess of £80,000 in early 2016. The Kirk Session made the conscious decision at that time to invest around half of this surplus in having a student assistant minister and a full time youth worker. This investment continued with appointing a part time Deaconess in 2020 and a part time Youth Coordinator in 2021.

These changes to our ministry team came at the same time as the Covid pandemic threw all our lives into confusion and whilst our congregational finances benefited from the Furlough money

provided by the UK Government, the prevailing uncertainty of Covid and our focus on the Link Project meant that the developing trend in our No:1 Account was not receiving the attention that it would have done in more normal times.

We could probably have absorbed the additional costs of non-Link property spending and loss of a year's non-commercial car park income in more normal times but like everyone else the church has suffered from the substantial increase in the cost of living with the impact seen especially in our increased energy costs. It is also very clear that the squeeze on the income of contributing members of our church family meant that giving to the Link Project was prioritised over giving to FWO and our No:1 Account.

We have experienced a perfect storm over the last 3 or 4 years that has left us with the hole that we have in the 'roof' of our No:1 Account and we need take action to fix this in the current financial year so that the situation does not become any worse.

Where does our money for the No:1 Account come from?

The vast majority of the income to our No:1 Account comes from regular Freewill Offering (FWO) giving by our contributing families. This income is enhanced by Gift Aid claimed on this giving where the contributor is a UK tax payer. Together these provide income of around £140,000. Our other main source of income is our car park where the letting of commercial spaces and contributions from members contribute around £10,000.

This means that in an average year our congregational income to cover our running cost is in the order of £150,000.

How is the money in our No:1 Account spent?

Staff salaries make up around 60% of our annual expenditure from our No:1 Account with the rates for the 3 largest salaries set by the General Assembly. As with all other Presbyterian churches in Ireland we pay an annual assessment to the Central Funds of our church with this being based on our assessable income less allowable deductions, this is about 8% of our total spending.

The remainder of our expenditure is on the day to day running costs of our church with energy, commercial rates on our car park and manse and insurance being the main areas we spend on.

Prior to Covid and the Link Project these ran at a little over £40,000 per year but with the impact of the increase in the cost of energy and general inflation, these have risen by around £12,000 per year.

What is our overspend?

In the 2021 accounts our excess of expenditure over income was around £11,000 with this further deteriorating in 2022 with expenditure exceeding income by just over £30,000 (details will be provided in the annual accounts). Very simply, the situation we face is serious and needs our attention in the current financial year as the alternative is that things will only get worse.

What can we do?

We are faced with two main ways we can act to resolve our problem, we can increase income and/or cut expenditure. In

reality, we have very limited ability to reduce our expenditure as the main elements (that is, staff costs, PCI assessments, rates and insurance) are essential and set by others.

The most effective way to address our problem not just now, but for future years, is to increase our income. This means asking each contributing family to look at whether you can increase your FWO. We encourage contributions by standing order but realise that it is all too easy to forget to review the amount given each year with the result that it remains the same when expenditure increases with inflation.

The Solution to our problem

Our church has approximately 250 contributing families and our deficit was £30,000 in 2022 or £120 for each contributing family for the year.

We could address our deficit and set our church finances on a stable course for the future if each contributing family could increase their FWO giving by £10 per month.

That is what we are now asking you to give your prayerful consideration to and to take action as you are able. We commend this request to each family connected with our congregation.

Yours in His service,

Stephen Johnston (Clerk of Session)
Gordon Wallace (Treasurer)
Michael Davidson (Minister)



SERVICES FOR APRIL

2nd April

10:30am	Genesis 30:25-43 'Jacob Versus Laban'
6:30pm	Speaker: Ziggy Rogoff

EASTER SERVICES 2023

Wednesday 5th April at 7:30pm

'Jesus Is The Way' – Michael Davidson

Thursday 6th April at 7:30pm

'Jesus is the Truth' – Matthew Kelso (Sloan Street PC)

Good Friday Communion Service 7th April at 7:00pm

'Jesus is the Life' – Diarmid Finnegan

Sunday 9th April

6:30am	Dawn Service at Wallace Park Band Stand Speaker – Andrew Faulkner (Sloan Street PC)
10:30am	EASTER FAMILY SERVICE 'Jesus is The Way, the Truth & the Life' Michael Davidson

16th April

10:30am	Pulpit Supply
6:30pm	1 Timothy 4:6-16 'Minister in Training' Stephen Johnston

23rd April

10:30am Genesis 31:1-55 'Jacob Makes A Run For It'
Michael Davidson

30th April

10:30am Genesis 32:1-21 'Preparing to Face Your Worst
Nightmare'
Michael Davidson

6:30pm 1 Timothy 5:1-16 'House Rules'
Michael Davidson

NB: Our Deaconess Heide England will be on holiday 10-16 April



Watch online at
www.railwaystreet.org



Telephone Line Service
028 9244 8979



Photo by Sixteen Miles Out on Unsplash

Prayer Focus

Luke 11:1 “Lord, teach us to pray.”

Here is an opportunity to join together in prayer. We especially welcome new members and those who would prefer to pray quietly and let others lead. Together we seek God's will and his guidance as we bring prayers of healing for a broken world.

Please join us in the
Upper Room/Link
on **Monday 17th April**
from **8.00-9.00pm**



Bible Discovery Group

There will be one more meeting of the Bible Discovery Group for this session.

Thursday 20th April
at 10.45am
in No 31



Helping Hands

The final meeting of Helping Hands for this year will be on Thursday 6th April at 2.30pm in No 31. Anyone wishing to pass on knitted items for distribution please see Heather or Edith before the end of May. Thanks.



The next meeting of the

Congregational Committee

will be held on

**Wednesday 19th April
in the Upper Room
at 8pm**



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Thursday 27th April
at 2.30pm
in the Minor Hall

Play It By Ear (Drama)

All welcome



Photo by Tamara Gak on Unsplash



Dates for your diary

Railway Street PW

- Monday 24th April at 8.00pm in Railway Street Presbyterian Church. Rev. David Cupples will speak about his pilgrimage along the Camino. This meeting is open to everyone.



“In April – May 2017 I took a sabbatical. It took the form of a long walk, a very long walk – 670 miles to be precise. I walked along the route of the Camino de Santiago de Compostela.”

- Presbyterian Women’s Annual Conference

“Being Transformed”

Thursday 4th May 2023 in Assembly Buildings Belfast
Guest speaker Ali Calvin

Afternoon Session 2.00pm to 3.30pm

Evening Celebration 7.30pm to 9.00pm

Encourage One Another WhatsApp Group

This WhatsApp Group started when we were unable to meet in person three years ago.

The aim of the Group is simply to encourage one another.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 says: *Therefore let us encourage one another and build each other up.*

Hebrews 10:24-25 says: *Let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another...*

Could you be an encourager to others by posting a Bible verse, a hymn or song, a devotional thought or poem?

Or would you simply like to be encouraged?

If you are not already on this WhatsApp Group and would like to join please contact Richard on 07807 439 348 or Janet on 07803 265 517



Advance Notice – Christian Aid Week

As in past years our congregation will be supporting, through financial contributions, the work of Christian Aid and this year their special Appeal Week is being held from 14th to 20th May. Envelopes for your donations will be available in due course and further details will be included in the May bulletin.

YOUTH NEWS



EASTER YOUTH DAY

THURSDAY 6TH APRIL

AFTERNOON FUN 1PM
FAMILY DINNER 5:30PM
EVENING SERVICE 7:30PM



GANAWAY LEADERS REGISTRATION OPEN NOW!

Go to g23.railwaystreet.org to register
Leaders sign up will close 2nd April & camper sign up will open after Easter.



Railway Street

Strategic Mission Plan

2023 - 2025

Our Purpose:
'Following Christ – Serving the Community'



'In obedience to Christ, we will work together to see people coming to faith in Christ and growing in love for God and others.'

Our Mission Statement commits us to Christ centred worship, discipleship, evangelism, fellowship and service.

On 10th June 2022 the Kirk Session took some time away to focus on where we were as a congregation and to identify those areas where we were encouraged as well as thinking about our weaknesses and the challenges and opportunities as we looked forward.

As we look back on our former Mission Plan which was launched in 2016 it is encouraging to recognise the many areas where God has been at work and where progress has been made.

1. Encouragements

- The vision to redevelopment the Link which was only at a very early stage in 2016 was completed and handed over by the contractor in October 2022 offering many exciting opportunities to develop worship, fellowship, discipleship, evangelism and service within RSPC
- We rejoice in the launch of our Girls Brigade Company as well as the ongoing life and vibrancy of our Boys Brigade.
- PW continued to meet through the pandemic providing support to members of all ages and continuing to develop links with global mission
- 422 adapted well to the twin challenges of Covid 19 and the disruptions of the building work continuing to provide valuable practical and pastoral care for older members of our congregation
- We give thanks for the development of our online ministry – much of this was necessitated and spurred on by the onset of Covid 19 restrictions. This includes:
 - The ongoing development of a RSPC Website
 - The launch of live streaming on Sunday mornings since July 2020

- The use of Zoom for many meetings and ministries
- The increased use of the RSPC Facebook Page
- We give thanks for the opportunities a number have had to serve on short term Mission Teams
 - Exodus Youth Teams to Romania in 2019 & 2022 and to Dungannon & Donaghadee in 2021
 - Two adult work teams sent to the Exodus Centre in Sutor, Romania in 2018 & 2019
 - PW Mission Trip to Italy
- We are encouraged by the development of relationships with local schools in conjunction with SU E3 programme
- The election of 6 new elders and we recognise and give thanks for the dedicated service of all those who retired
- Appointment of a Deaconess who has brought a very valuable new dimension to the pastoral work of our congregation
- Many new families and individuals have joined us since 2016
- We have seen encouraging growth among those in the twenties and thirties.

2. Weaknesses

- Despite seeing a net growth in the number of families connected with Railway Street over the last 3 years the potential risk of long term membership decline remains as a result of the overall age profile of the congregation
- While we are seeing gradual growth in Beginners Church we currently have a small number of primary school age in Kids Church on a Sunday

- While we are encouraged by the number of new families coming in through the front door we are conscious that some others have exited through the back especially during the time of covid restrictions
- We understand that we are not always good at helping people identify their gifts and then providing opportunities for them to use those gifts in RSPC
- We are conscious that we could be more effective in reaching out to our wider community
- While many no doubt pray individually the corporate prayer life of Railway Street continues to be weak.

3. Identifying Priorities & Opportunities from 2023-2025

We recognise the ongoing vital nature of the following areas of church life:

- All Age Discipleship
- Outward Intentional Evangelism
- Worship
- Service
- Fellowship.

The Kirk Session are of the opinion that the two areas of church life in Railway Street that we need to place particular strategic emphasis on in the next two years are all age discipleship and outward intentional evangelism.

In parallel with this strategic focus, we will continue to develop Worship, Service and Fellowship with the intention of seeing the following:

Worship

- After the disruption of covid related restrictions and the new patterns that developed over that time, we want to challenge and encourage all Railway Street members and families to rededicate themselves to the central importance of meeting together for worship weekly
- We will continue to work to see that our corporate worship is first and foremost Christ-centred and God glorifying
- We will seek to develop worship that is inclusive of all ages.

Service

- We want to continue to encourage all to use their gifts and to encourage new members to discover the avenue for service that they are gifted for
- We want to find ways to recognise and encourage all those who use their gifts to serve in RSPC.

Fellowship

- We want to see relationships between those of all ages deepen and grow as we share together in the life of faith and service that God has called us to
- We believe the new Link facilities provide many opportunities for informal fellowship both on Sundays and throughout the week and we want to encourage all members to avail of these opportunities
- Through the promotion of discipleship groups we pray that we will see fellowship deepen - and we want to encourage new and existing members to be part of these groups.

4. Strategic Priority Areas for 2023-2025

We will place particular emphasis on these two strategic priority areas in the following ways.

All Age Discipleship

- We will seek to develop and implement an intentional and structured curriculum for children from Beginners Church, through Kids Church and into Youth church that will give them a well-rounded understanding of the story of the Bible as a whole
- The provision of the new Link facilities opens up the opportunities to look at different forms of discipleship focused ministry on alternate Sunday evenings. Among the options to consider are:
 - Small groups looking at different issues or the use of courses such as Discipleship Explored
 - The provision of an intergenerational discipleship programme on a Sunday evening
 - A Faith academy – offering different streams on the same night for people to choose from
- The renewal and relaunch of discipleship groups during the week meeting in people's homes or within the Link
- We will seek to relaunch our Men's Ministry
- We want to see the integration of new members into discipleship opportunities.

Outward Intentional Evangelism

- We want to put intentional outreach at the heart of our church's work and witness

- We will devote ourselves to praying for God to bring to saving faith those both inside and outside the congregation
- We will continue to ensure that the challenge to respond to the gospel is presented through the preaching of God's Word
- We will continue to develop our website and social media platforms to support our church's outreach
- The launch of an informal coffee morning in the first 3 months of 2023 in the Link which will be evaluated after 6 months to assess the opportunities that arise out of this for other discipleship, evangelism or fellowship opportunities
- The use of the Link as a dedicated parents' area on Tuesday & Thursday evenings during BB and GB to build up relationships with non RSPC families.
- The recommencement of an Easter Bible Club in Brownlee Primary School
- The use of the Link for developing a Café Church as a means of outreach
- We will work towards the use of one of the Christianity Explored resources in 2023 within the Link or in a neutral venue such as Percival's coffee shop or Brownlee Primary School
- We will look again at opportunities for a Toddlers group
- We will look at how we build meaningful links with local businesses.

5. Mission Support

In terms of our support and involvement in the work of Mission Agencies, at home and overseas we recognise that it is not possible for our congregation to support everything. We also

recognise that individual members will have different missions and charities that they support. However, the Kirk Session believes that as a congregation we should focus our interest and support on a more limited and specified number of mission organisations locally and internationally.

These mission agencies are:

Locally & Nationally

1. Lisburn Foodbank
2. Christians Against Poverty
3. Exodus
4. Scripture Union E3 Schools Project
5. Belfast City Mission Christmas Appeal
6. PCI Mission in Ireland – investigate and agree the option of partnering with a PCI Home Mission congregation (by June 2023)

Internationally

1. Tearfund
2. Christian Aid
3. Open Doors
4. PCI Global Mission – develop partnership with Diane Cusick and the Kennedys
5. Samaritans Purse Shoebox Appeal
6. Jews for Jesus

We will seek to ensure that we receive regular updates from each of these organisations either through deputation speakers or through the church bulletin.

Through all this we humbly pray that Jesus will be pleased to build His church among us, and through us, to the glory of His great name. Amen.

This strategic mission plan will be reviewed annually
as we seek to measure progress.