



First Dromara  
Presbyterian Church

# The Link

Autumn 2025



# Encouragement from your Convenor

As I reflect on the life and witness of First Dromara Presbyterian Church, I am filled with gratitude and joy.

What a privilege it is to be part of such a vibrant, caring, and progressive congregation, one that is alive with faith, hope, and compassion. Week by week, I am reminded that this church is far more than a building; it is a living, breathing community where God's love is experienced and shared.

There is a wonderful sense of warmth and welcome in First Dromara. You can feel it as soon as you walk through the door, in the smiles, the conversations, and the genuine care shown for one another. Worship is full of life and meaning, and there is a willingness to embrace new ideas while holding fast to the faith that grounds us.

This is a congregation that values its heritage yet looks confidently to the future, eager to serve Christ in ways that speak to today's world.

Being Convenor here is truly a joy. I am constantly inspired by the dedication, creativity, and generosity



of spirit that flows through every part of church life. From those who lead worship and music, to those who care quietly behind the scenes. Each person contributes something special to the tapestry of our shared faith.

As we continue our journey together, may we keep that spirit of joy and openness alive. Let us celebrate all that God is doing among us, remain hopeful for what lies ahead, and stay ready to follow wherever the Spirit leads.

First Dromara Presbyterian, is growing in faith, in love, and in joy.

***Rev Paul Jamieson***

# Some thoughts on prayer

## from Colossians 4

F.B. Meyer, the author of a book called, *The Secret of Guidance* said, "The great tragedy of life is not unanswered prayer, but un-offered prayer."

Instead of it being something we do everyday, like breathing, eating and walking and talking, it seems to have become like that little glass covered box on the wall that says, "break in case of emergency." It is true that so very often we associate prayer with crises in our life.

Paul was somebody who understood prayer and its power. Prayer was a part of Paul's life, and he took it for granted that it would be a part of the life of every Christian. Prayer is the pipeline of communication between God and His people, between God and those who love Him.

### **1. Pray with persistence**

Paul begins by saying, "Devote yourselves to prayer." Two of the most instructive parables Jesus ever told on prayer, one in Luke 18 and the other in Luke 11, both have to do with being persistent and not giving up in prayer.

- Luke 18:1 says, "Now He was telling them a parable to show them that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart."
- Luke 11:9 is where we find the promise that says, "ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you." Each of those verbs are in the present tense, active voice and could be translated, "keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking." Jesus does not want us to give up in prayer, He instructs us to be persistent.

**Continued on next page**



## **2. Pray with passion**

If you are persistent in something, it stands to reason that you are to be passionate about it. In fact, Paul says we should be vigilant or be watchful; it is the opposite of slothfulness. This describes passionate prayer.

Every time we see Jesus praying He was praying with passion.

- In Luke 3:1 at His Baptism - while He was praying, the heaven was opened. Passionate prayer opens Heaven.
- In Luke 6:12 before He called His disciples - He spent the whole night in prayer. Passionate prayer gives direction.

## **3. Pray with thankfulness**

Paul never fails to mention it.

- Ephesians 5:20 tells us that thanksgiving is the natural result of being filled with and walking under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

- Philippians 4:6 tells us to be anxious for nothing but in everything we should pray, giving thanks as we make our petitions known to God.

**4. Pray, making intercession** Intercessory prayer is basically praying for others, it is praying for God's will to be done in the lives of other people. Intercessory prayers characterised the prayer life of Jesus.

- In Isaiah 53:12 the Bible says, He Himself bore the sins of many and, interceded for the transgressors."
- Luke 22:32 Jesus tells Peter, "I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail."

Things that happen when we pray:

***Prayer forces us to wait***

Part of prayer is always waiting for God. God has three answers to prayers: Yes, no and wait.

***Prayer opens our spiritual eyes***

That's because prayer is communication. We speak to God, God answers us, speaking to us, showing us.

***It aligns our heart with God's heart***

It sets our thoughts, emotions and actions.

***Prayer enables us to move forward***

Prayer engages God, enables God's people, and enlarges His kingdom. Jesus said, "without Me, you can do nothing." Once we have prayed we are ready to do anything, until we have prayed we can do nothing, but once we have prayed we can accomplish anything.

What does our prayer life look like today? Are you persistent in prayer? Are our prayers passionate? What about gratitude? How much time do we spend thanking God for all He has done for us? And who are we praying for? Is there anyone in your life that you are praying will get saved? Is there a burden on your heart to see God's kingdom expand, to see His will done? Keep on praying.

# ***Christmas events at First Dromara***

**We look forward to welcoming you to our  
Christmas events in First Dromara!**

*Tuesday 9 Dec: Carols and Catch-up Aughnaskeagh Silver Band.*

*Saturday 13 Dec: Sunday School Christmas Party.*

*Sunday 14 Dec: 11.30am Christmas Programme by Sunday School.*

*Sunday 21 Dec: 11.30am Traditional Service of Lessons and Carols.*

*Sunday 21 Dec: 7.00pm Candlelight Service by Youth Fellowship.*

*Thursday 25 Dec: 10.30 Christmas Morning Service.*



## **Vacancy statement - 2 November 2025**

As I am sure you are aware the arrangements for attempting to fill the vacancy in our congregation has been steered by Presbytery and Church Headquarters – specifically the Linkage Commission. As I have expressed before, given the significant shortage of ministers, the direction we have been given is towards a linkage with the congregation of Second Dromara.

Session has had talks with representatives of Linkage Commission, Presbytery and the Session of Second Dromara and we have reached agreement on many of the important matters in relation to the coming together of our two congregations. It will mean each congregation will carry on independently but with sharing a minister. Also in the arrangement will be the Community Outreach Worker who has been working in Second Dromara for some years. Part of his time will be spent working on our behalf both within the congregation and also in our local community. In the fullness of time we will probably be joining with Second for some events and activities, as we have done in years past.

Events moved forward this past week when, on Tuesday, (28 Oct.) representatives from both Sessions met formally with the Linkage Commission and Leave to Call was granted. This means that our two congregations can now move forward together in the process of calling a new minister who will serve with us.

Members of both congregations will be kept fully informed of each step in the calling process and your continued prayerful support is encouraged as we seek God's guidance for the future ministry of this united charge.

**Ian McCullagh**

# Church record

## **Births**

Ben Wilson – first child to Felicity and Alan Wilson – November 2023

Sam Campbell – third son to Deborah and Alex Campbell – December 2023

Effie Martin – third child to Helen and David Martin – February 2024

Arthur Carlisle – first child to Rebecca and David Carlisle – April 2025

Rhea Smith – first child to Amy and Chris Smith – August 2025

Anna McCracken – second daughter to Bethany and Simon McCracken – September 2025

## **Baptisms**

Sam Campbell, son of Deborah and Alex Campbell 5 May 2024

Levi Starrett, son of Alison and Ashley Starrett, 29 September 2024

Effie Martin, daughter of Helen and David Martin 18 August 2024

Ben Wilson, son of Felicity and Alan Wilson, 13 October 2024

Rebecca Carlisle on Profession of Faith 1 June 2025

Mark Harte on Profession of Faith 1 June 2025



Mark Morton on Profession of Faith 1 June 2025

John Wallace on Profession of Faith 1 June 2025

Arthur Carlisle, son of Rebecca and David Carlisle, 7 September 2025

## **Marriages**

Catherine Wallace, daughter of John and Jennifer Wallace to Philip Magowan, son of Thomas and Mary Magowan on 3 August 2024

Charlotte Hawthorne, daughter of Robert and Audrey Hawthorne to David Gibbons, son of Andrew and Christine Gibbons on 22 August 2025

## **Deaths**

Lavina Johnston on 9 December 2023

Anne Greer on 18 December 2023

Edwin (Eddie) Clingan on 12 January 2024

Madge Graham on 13 January 2024

Harry Scott on 9 February 2024

Amy Bingham on 29 April 2024

Mary Malcomson on 17 May 2024

Geoffrey Gamble on 19 December 2024

Pamela Creighton on 9 March 2025

Marie Cosgrove on 26 April 2025

Robert John (Roy) Snowden on 14 July 2025

Audrey Wilson on 15 September 2025

Eileen Ervine on 10 November 2025

# Camps—Helping young people encounter God in a real and powerful way

This summer I had the privilege of being involved in three incredible camps and missions with Scripture Union Northern Ireland – MAC 3, P7 Camp, and SU@New Horizon.

Each one was unique, but all shared a common theme: helping young people encounter God in a real and powerful way.

I loved seeing young people step away from their busy lives and open their hearts and minds to God. It is always such a blessing to watch them grow in faith, and overflow with joy, whilst having lots of fun and laughter along the way!

Serving at camps and missions each year always strengthens my own relationship with God. I am constantly reminded of God's faithfulness and the privilege it is to walk alongside young people in their faith journey.

As I look back, I am so thankful for another brilliant summer, for the people, the stories and God being at work through it all!

As I look to the year ahead, I am excited to be the main leader of Mourne Adventure Camp 2 in 2026.

I'd love prayer for preparation, for the team, for every young person that will sign up throughout the year and that we would continue to see lives changed and faith deepened!

**Nathan Redmond**

# CSSM in Portballintrae

I'm Lucy, a Finance student at Queen's University, currently on my placement year with FinTrU in Belfast. From the 1st to the 11th of July, I had the privilege of serving as a leader at CSSM in Portballintrae, working with the 15–18 years old group.

Each day at CSSM was split into three sections: a morning beach service with all age groups, an afternoon session with our individual sections, and an evening gathering when one of us would give a talk. In the afternoons, I led Bible studies with around eight girls which was a new challenge for me, as I'd never led a small group on my own before. It turned out to be one of the most encouraging parts of the week. The girls were open, thoughtful, and eager to engage, which made each session so meaningful. We also had loads of fun playing games and building friendships.

In the evenings, we explored themes from Tim Chester's 'Enjoying God.' I had the opportunity to speak on enjoying God through prayer. Preparing and delivering that talk stretched me, but it was amazing to



see how God used it to spark meaningful conversations and reflection.

I was apprehensive when I found out I had been placed with the 15–18 year olds, as I am not far away from them in age and I know how hard it is to engage teenagers. However, I was blown away by their enthusiasm, their questions, and their desire to grow. Their excitement for CSSM and their willingness to be part of it was incredibly uplifting.

I want to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone who prayed for me and the team. Your prayers were felt in so many ways - in moments of strength, in deep conversations, and in the joy that filled each day.

**Lucy Copes**



# Serving with Scripture Union @ New Horizon

Over the past three summers, I have had the privilege of serving as part of the Scripture Union team at New Horizon, specifically in the amazing (and best) section that is SEN (Special Educational Needs).

This year, Julie McCracken also joined the team, leaving First Dromara well represented. We have a fantastic group of volunteer leaders of all ages (ranging from 16 to 60), who come alongside approximately 30 children and young people who have

additional needs, to share God's love with them and encourage both them and their families in their faith. Our section is filled with fun, lots of laughter and precious spiritual investments in each child or young person and their family circle.

So, what does a day in the SEN Section look like? Brace, brace, brace! The children and young people start to arrive from 9.30am. They are greeted by their buddies and are able to enjoy some free time, when they

can play games outside or inside, join in with lots of sensory play shenanigans, or simply chat to their buddies. It's really up to them!

Following on from this, we all get together to do our morning warm-up songs: we say hello to one another and get to 'clap our crazies out' or 'jog our jitters out'.

From here, we then explain what our plan for the day is, using both Makaton and our visual timetable. Following this, we have some time praising our amazing God – think dancing wheelchairs, waving ribbons and lots of full-throttle singing.

After this, we have a short prayer before our Bible lesson, which is often extremely interactive, with lots more visual aids, Makaton and even the odd real-life Bible character! Following this, it is time for snack, when one of our leaders' home baking really makes it all the sweeter. Nobody butters pancakes quite like Cherith!



Now that our tummies are full, we then enjoy some craft time, when we, as leaders, are able to reinforce the truths from the Bible story through more sensory activities and visual aids.

The day finishes off at 1pm with some more praise time, usually closing with a Makaton version of the well known praise song 'The Blessing'. As leaders, we are able to sing over the children and young people and they over us. It is truly special.

It really is such an honour and a privilege to be a small part of these cherished children and young people's lives and of their families' experience of New Horizon, reinforcing the truth that our Heavenly Father cares for and welcomes all.

The joy that exudes from these children is truly infectious and can only point us in the direction of Jesus and His unwavering love for all of us, no matter our capabilities.

And finally, thank you to you, the church family in First Dromara, for all your prayerful support and encouragement.

**Sophie McCullough**

# Exchange – My way to His way

In July 2025, I went to Ramelton, Ireland on an Exodus Exchange team.

I met my team in February and we had weekly meet-ups to study the Bible and plan for the week in July.

Our course was called Exchange – My Way to His Way. It was all about changing our sinful ways to God's perfect ones to help us grow in our faith. We went through the book of Matthew which I found very helpful as we were reading about how Jesus evangelised, which was very applicable to running the kids club. We also planned for the club by writing our talks for each day and thinking of games and quizzes to do with the kids.

We had to fundraise for the expenses of running the kids club which we did by organising a coffee morning one Saturday in the Exodus building and some other team members held fundraisers in their

own churches. We also set up a JustGiving page and we are so thankful to everyone who contributed towards our team.

Just before heading to Ramelton, we went to Coleraine for three days to take part in an Exodus Launch programme to help us prepare for the kids club.

There were different workshops we took part in, such as learning how to explain games to young children and how to make our talks understandable for the kids.

After the launch, we travelled to Ramelton Presbyterian Church and met Richard and his wife Julie and their three daughters. We stayed in the church hall for the week and were extremely well catered for by members of the church who brought us home cooked meals and dessert every evening for dinner!

Day 1 of the kids club was a bit



chaotic because two team members were in bed sick after suffering from food poisoning from a local takeaway! That meant someone had to deliver their talk for them and we had to make up new games for the children, but God helped us through and everything ran smoothly.

We had a meeting after the club every day to talk about what we could do differently and pray over

the kids. We clearly saw God working throughout the week by helping us overcome sickness, bad weather and encouraging the kids to express an interest in hearing about Jesus.

We really appreciate everyone who supported us financially and through prayer.

**Sophie Coulter**



# Annual camp in Poland

We left for Dublin on the 2nd of August in early hours of the morning, landed in Poland and travelled to Szczytno later that day.

We were staying in the local church in the upstairs Sunday School rooms. The church was right beside a lake so after we got settled in we went for a swim. That Sunday we attended and took part in the Morning Service where we were warmly welcomed by their church family. In the afternoon we set up the outdoor marquee with some decorations and prepared for the children coming.

On the Monday morning we were up bright and early for morning devotions and breakfast. Then the kids arrived at 9am and stayed with us till 4pm. Throughout the day we had two meetings where all the leaders followed a programme which involved, leading, favourite Bible verse, praying, Christian friend, Christian experience etc. There was always what's called 'second breakfast' where the kids had crepes or maybe pancakes and then there was lunch.

In Poland, lunch is dinner. This is the big meal of the day and consisted of meals like chicken dinners. We also had workshops which were craft, baking, sports, games and worksheets. After the kids went home, we had a Bible study and fellowship with the youth in the church. Some intense volleyball matches were played before dinner. Dinner in Poland is our lunch so we had sandwiches and maybe some leftovers from lunch.







We bonded so well as a team and got on fantastic with the children, some of them knew broken English so we were able to communicate with them. We were also blessed to have lots of translators, as several of the Polish leaders spoke full English so that was extremely helpful.

On the 9th of August we made the four-hour journey to the next camp which was in Ostroda. Here we slept in classrooms upstairs above the Church hall. The rest of the team who came out for this camp met us there and we had some team bonding over games and a big meal that was very kindly prepared by the Pastor's wife and daughters. That Sunday we took part in the Morning service sharing about the camp we had just been at and more about what was happening this week at their church.

At this camp there was less people who spoke English, so it was much harder to communicate with the children and with the leaders, but God was still moving throughout this camp. Each day was so busy playing tag with the kids from the minute they walked through the door at 9 till they walked back out again at 3pm. We followed a similar programme as the last camp with two meetings each day, workshops and lots of food of course! Once the kids went home we had a Bible study and fellowship with their youth too. More volleyball and fun nights at beaches and lakes.

Throughout both camps the Lord was moving, with boys and girls getting saved at each one and especially at the second camp several youth of the church were saved. This was such an encouragement as that is what it's all for. As the Bible says in Mark 16:15, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel'. It is all for the glory of God and we continue to thank him for all he did and is doing in each of the camps.

**Anya and Inez Harper**

# ‘We pray that seeds have been planted in their hearts’

In July 2025, we went to Zywiec, Poland on a CEF Momentum team.

We were linked with the local evangelical church, whose pastor Dawid and wife Agnieszka are EMF missionaries.

We stayed in the church halls and all of our meals were provided by the church team. We were warmly welcomed by the Polish team who organised activities for us like a very competitive game of volleyball, padel tennis, a church picnic and exploring the local town. We didn't know too many Polish words so were very relieved that the Polish leaders' English was better than ours!

We had not had the opportunity to meet the other Northern Irish team

members or leaders before travelling to Poland, and the time available to prepare for each day was very limited, so we did feel under quite a bit of pressure.

During the week, we helped to run a children's club for kids ranging in age from 3 to 15. On a typical day, we had about 40 kids attending.

The theme for the week was the book of Ruth. After the singing and Bible story, we split the kids into age groups and organised different activities, for example water sports, crafts and football.

Highlights included pizza decorating, a campfire in the forest, roasted smores and playing in the river. We enjoyed teaching them music with a guitar and cajon drum. The kids



were full of life, with tons of energy and demanded constant piggy-backs from both of us! Some of them were little rascals so we had lots of fun interacting with them!

Some of the challenges were the heat as it was 35 degrees for most of the week. The language barrier with the kids was frustrating, as we'd love to have been able to get to know them better.

It was very rewarding, though, as the

kids responded well to us and listened attentively via the translators.

We pray that seeds have been planted in their hearts and that they will have more opportunities to hear the gospel while they are still children.

We would like to thank everyone who prayed for us this summer.

**Daniel & Matthew Coulter**



***‘We saw God do great things  
and I know He will continue  
to use all that was done at  
camp for His glory and good’***

Back in July, I had the joy of leading the CEF, Mourne Area Junior Camp for P5-P7s.

I led a team of 27 leaders and 78 children staying at Seaview House, Kilkeel. This has been one of my favourite weeks each summer for the past 13 years, serving as a camp

counsellor.

This year, I was approached and asked if I would take on responsibility of leading the team. After prayerful consideration and getting a few shifts swapped, I signed up to the task.

Leading a camp of 78 children was a lot of fun but brought plenty of challenges.

I co-ordinated a programme jam-packed with activities, as 'free time' with this age group is non-existent. I had a fantastic team of counsellors helping to run the programme and build relationships with the children.

We organised a variety of activities including sports day, crafts, treasure hunts, team games, outings and more.

The focus of camp is always time spent learning from God's Word. Each day involves a morning and evening meeting, along with a missionary story.

This year, our theme was the story of Esther and how God is our deliverer.

In our evening doctrinal, we looked at who Jesus is and learned about Nate Saint and his missionary journey to the Auca people in Ecuador.

Each morning and evening was spent with our dorm groups having a 'quiet time'. This is a dedicated

time where the leaders get to explore questions about the lessons and create a space for the kids to share what Jesus means to them. It also provides an opportunity to answer questions about faith and following Jesus.

During the week, we saw five children accept Jesus as their personal Saviour. This was an incredible answer to prayer, to see God working and opening hearts during our time at camp.

Leading the team while also being camp medic this year meant my week was particularly tiring, but I still had a blast. I was personally challenged to rely on God's help and to focus on prayer specifically for my team of leaders and campers.

It has been my prayer that the seeds planted during the week have continued to take root and grow into outward faith for each child. We saw God do great things and I know He will continue to use all that was done at camp for His glory and good.

**Simon McCracken**

# Team leads Holiday Bible

## Club in Dundalk

### Presbyterian Church

As July gave way to August, the familiar reoccurrence of Dundalk Holiday Bible Club again befell us.

For any with no firsthand experience (and that list shortens by the year), the endearing charm that keeps drawing First Dromara folk back to this place is embodied by the local minister, Rev. Jonathan Porter.

Softly spoken with a lilting Monaghan brogue, the saying, “so laid back he’s almost horizontal” is apt. It’s a reassuring and welcoming quality. It sets the tone for the week.

There is a strong sense here of being among friends. All efforts are valued. Trying and failing isn’t really failing at all. The appreciation is sincere, the fellowship warm and the hospitality legendary.

And then there’s the kids. Even as a repeated visitor, I still find the ethnic

diversity of children in this place staggering.

As a future experiment, I must count the countries of origin represented. It must reach double figures. And yet these are Dundalk kids. Amongst those sporting afro hair and dreadlocks, you’ll find names such as Aoife and Padraig. Almost all attend the adjacent school and come from families who, for one reason or another have made this town their home. It’s humbling to remember that this week, we are the outsiders with strange accents. What better opportunity then to turn our hearts to the Saviour who unites, renews, and in whom human division melts away.

Each morning began with worship. High-octane, pulse-raising, cardio-worship. A collective harnessing of joy in response to the God from which it came. Thereafter followed a



### ‘Showstopping’ story.

Headline-grabbing accounts of how this almighty God intervened in our world through perfect creation, slaying giants, taming lions, a miraculous incarnation, sacrificial death and glorious resurrection. The morning continued with craft, snacks, games, challenges, personal stories, quizzes (including the obligatory shaving cream and Wotsit amalgamation), and many laughs.

Whilst our memory verse from Psalm 28v7, enthusiastically memorised and recited by the kids, underpinned the central truth we endeavoured to convey – that when rooted in Christ as our “strength and shield” we experience peace, assurance and

ultimate joy.

It is not for us to know the impact this week may have had on young lives, but trust that the Lord may use our efforts for His glory.

Personal thanks must also go to an exceptional team of individuals for volunteering their time and considerable talent.

You were a pleasure to serve alongside — Alex McClintock, Andrew Greer, Andrea Wilson, Gillian Spiers, Jessica McClintock, Jessica Spiers, Jonny Rodgers, Jonny Spiers, Judith McClintock, Karen Walker, Leah Spiers, Ruby Copes, Ruth Copes, Sarah Megarry, Zoe Johnston.

**Ashley Starrett**

