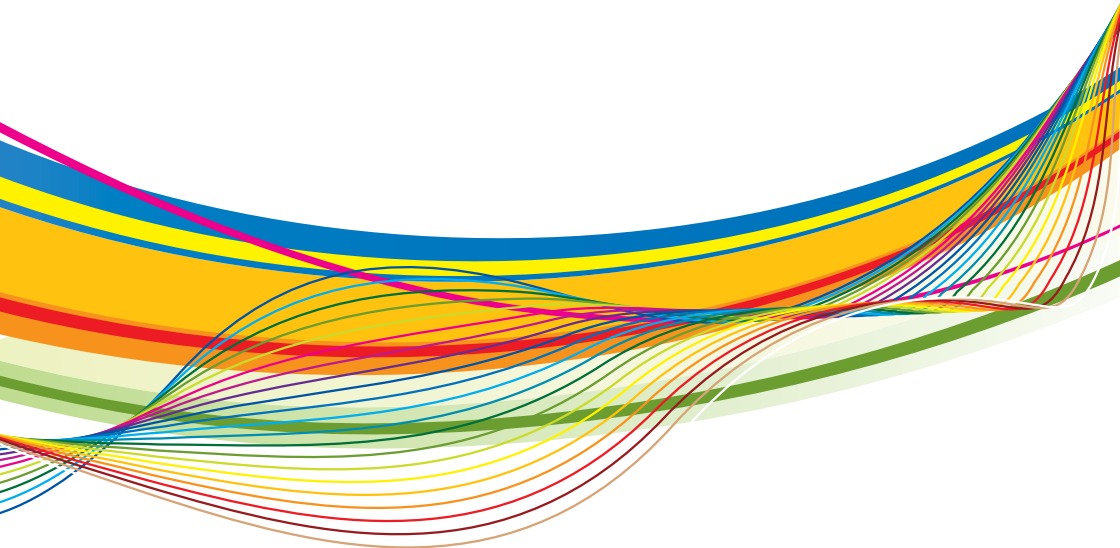


Going Forward Together

Vision plan
to 2015



Ballyloughan
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

An introduction from our Kirk Session

“**Imagine...?**” That question encapsulates the mindset of Ballyloughan in its beginnings as a church back in 1973, the first new church in Ballymena for 70 years. **Imagining** a Christian presence in the rapidly growing area of north Ballymena led the Presbyterian Church to plant a church. **Imagining** a community reached for Jesus spurred Rev. Joseph Fell to walk pavements, knock on doors and encourage people to join the church, while those of you involved in those early days imaginatively served in creative programmes appropriate to the time. During the ministry of Rev. David Brice, **imagining** a vibrant, caring church with impact on its local community encouraged others to serve with all of the energy and enthusiasm that God gave. The ‘**imagining**’ of additional members of our church family since then has also contributed to making Ballyloughan what it is today: a genuinely caring, united, grace-filled, biblical church; with members who sacrificially serve, have a heart to share Christ, and who are open to new ideas.

We live in a very different world from when Ballyloughan first began, a very different world from even a decade ago, an increasingly secular world where Jesus has been pushed to the margins. If we are to continue to be an influential community for Him, we mustn't become stagnant or settled but must continue that Ballyloughan attitude of openly, boldly and prayerfully ‘**imagining**’ what God could do in us and through us in the lives of others.

That principle lay behind our ‘Going Forward Together’ process in 2010, where, together, we were encouraged to prayerfully ‘**imagine**’ what God wants us to be in the coming years. Much thought and prayer went into this, and we want to thank the many of you who engaged in the process by contributing your views during our Sunday evening workshops and in various smaller working groups since then.

The result of that process of ‘**imagining**’ is the content of this booklet which was adopted by Kirk Session in November 2010. This booklet doesn't cover every area of church life, but it's our prayer that you will read it carefully and that as you do so, you will gain a fresh sense of excitement and a desire to become involved in our vision for the future.

Who we are:

Ballyloughan Presbyterian Church

We are a **Church**. We must never forget that! The Church is a people belonging to God, *"a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light"* [1 Peter 2:9]. We form part of the community of God's people. That means that our church community is special to God, and it means that as a Church we have a responsibility: not to be inwardly focussed but to declare the praises of God to a watching world.

We are **Presbyterian**. That doesn't refer to what style of worship we should have, what organisations we should have, or where we sit politically...it simply refers to *how we are governed* – by 'presbyters' or elders of whom the Minister is one. So leadership is shared, not just in the hands of an individual. There is today a move away from denominational churches, particularly among younger people, yet we believe that the 'Presbyterian' form of church government provides stability, continuity, and most importantly accountability. Being Presbyterian also says something about *what we believe*, including the convictions that the Bible is entirely true; that God is awesome; that sin has infiltrated our lives at the core of our being; that the cross of Jesus is absolutely central; that God's free offer of forgiveness through Jesus is utterly incredible; that responding to Jesus is essential; and that followers of Jesus are continually secure.

Finally, and importantly we are **Ballyloughan**. Yes we are Presbyterian but that doesn't mean that we need to be a clone of other Presbyterian churches nor a copy of the way Presbyterians have done things in the past! Every congregation, in every era, should have its unique 'fingerprint' or identity. We are by no means perfect, but we are a caring, grace-driven, serving, diverse yet united church family, with a heart to share Christ. We are a progressive church, faithful to Jesus Christ and prepared to try new things in a changing world for the sake of His name. This combination is a 'fingerprint' that we want to maintain and further develop in the years to come.

Our Priorities as a Congregation

Our aim is a congregation is a very clear one: *'to see people becoming wholehearted followers of Jesus Christ.'*

In pursuing this aim we are committed, with God's help, to the following priorities...



worshipping God with joy and placing Him at the centre of our lives.



growing closer to the character of Jesus as, with each other's help, we apply the Bible's teaching to our lives.



caring for each other in sacrificial ways that reveal the love of God.



serving God by using our abilities, time, money and possessions for Him.



engaging with our community and beyond with the radical love and message of Jesus.

Over the coming years, it's our desire to develop Ballyloughan in each of these areas. The following pages outline our aspirations for each of these areas of our church. In addition to this Kirk Session views our **Children's and Youth work** to be of critical importance, and so we have also begun the process of reviewing this aspect of church life.

Worshipping



Worshipping God with joy and placing Him at the centre of our lives.

Imagine...?

a church where we experience the greatness, grace and presence of God, leading us to a wholehearted response to Him.

How do we get there...?

- have worship services that **embrace all ages** and contain variety in our praise so that everyone can engage in worship.
- continue to provide **Bible teaching that has clear application and motivational impact**, leading to enthusiastic worship and lives surrendered to God.
- **evaluate our current musical requirements** to include exploring praise leadership and developing our team of musicians and singers. Continue with special choirs for praise festivals such as Harvest, Christmas and Easter.
- develop **greater flexibility in the structure of our services** to allow space and time for the Holy Spirit to minister His presence
- develop **special monthly evening services for the whole family** including appropriate praise, children's activity, teaching, and supper. More informal church family communions will also become part of this service.
- continue with and further **develop our prayer ministry** following Sunday Services.
- **recruit** and provide **training opportunities** for members of our **media team**.
- continually **appraise our technology and surroundings** so that they are conducive to enthusiastic worship.
- make our worship services available to more people, particularly the housebound, through the **expansion of our DVD distribution and online technologies**.
- establish a **worship review and planning team** to periodically evaluate all aspects of worship.

How can I help...?

by...

- personally preparing before coming to Sunday worship and when you arrive, praying that God's Presence would transform us.
- remembering as you come that God is the Audience of our worship.
- coming with an open heart, an open Bible, and an open notebook, eager to hear God speak.
- using a musical or vocal talent to help lead us in worship.
- joining our multi-media and sound team.
- taking a DVD of our service to someone who is housebound.

Growing



Growing closer to the character of Jesus as, with each other's help, we apply the Bible's teaching to our lives.

Imagine...?

a church which is vibrant with prayer, where everyone is growing deeper in their walk with God and is enthusiastically applying what they are being taught.

How do we get there...?

- encourage members in their personal walk with God by continuing to provide **Bible reading notes** for all ages and provide displays of Bible reading material and books relevant to sermon themes on a frequent basis.
- hold a special **weekend teaching conference** bi-annually inviting gifted speakers from outside. To begin autumn 2012.
- ensure that we provide a regular course for **supporting and teaching new Christians** in their faith.
- **continue and promote Next Step Groups** with the **addition of 'flexi-groups'** to enable those unable to attend regular small group nights to come together on a more flexible basis for prayer, biblical reflection and mutual support.
- identify and train new **Next Step group leaders**.
- **develop prayer guides** as a tool to help our members in their personal devotions.
- **improve the attendance at corporate prayer times** so that it more accurately reflects the number of people in our church. Accomplish this through providing a focus to our prayer and key monthly nights of prayer which are accessible to all.
- conduct a **review of our current children's and youth programmes** during 2011.
- establish a small team who have **responsibility for the review and planning of spiritual growth initiatives** under the direction of Kirk Session.

How can I help...?

by...

- developing the discipline of daily Bible reading and prayer.
- joining a Next Step group or flexi-group where you can be an encouragement to other Christians and through your insights help them apply the Bible's teaching to their lives.
- considering going through some training with the view to becoming a Next Step Group co-ordinator.
- participating in our corporate times of prayer.
- encouraging others in organisations you are involved in to think prayer first rather than last.

Caring



Caring for each other in sacrificial ways that reveal the love of God.

Imagine...?

a church where everyone feels welcome and cared for and where members respond to the needs of each other in practical and prayerful ways.

How do we get there...?

- **further develop our welcome teams** by introducing a 'floating' member of each team to look out for guests circulating in the vestibule.
- **increase our existing Care Team** providing visits to more elderly and housebound people and making contact with others for whom it is difficult to be involved in church life.
- expand the idea of our Meals for Mums initiative to **provide meals to families going through a difficult time** on a short-term basis.
- continue to **promote our Helping Hands initiative** through literature and announcements in church so that people would be encouraged to avail of it and contribute to it.
- **run courses** periodically such as marriage, parenting courses, finance management support, Griefshare, as well as providing details of useful courses outside of Ballyloughan.
- **make available resources** on a variety of pastoral issues through a display stand in the vestibule.
- encourage members to make use of **opportunities to receive prayer**, including our Sunday Prayer Team, our emergency prayer telephone chain, and calling the elders for prayer.
- **encourage young people to** care for others in the congregation: for example, involve youth organisations in providing gifts and cards at particular times of the year.

- **open our vestibule and coffee dock** initially one morning per week for people to drop in and meet with others. Office telephone also to be manned on these mornings so that people can phone for Helping Hands or other information.
- re-establish **Men of Ballyloughan** or similar group to develop stronger bonds between men from a church background or otherwise.
- re-establish the **Girls' Nights Out idea** for women, open to all women and appealing to those from no church background.
- ensure that a **sufficient number of church family events** take place each year.
- establish a **core team** who have **responsibility for the overall planning and expansion of care** under the direction of Session.
- **employ a part-time Pastoral Care Worker** by the autumn of 2012 to assist with Pastoral Work and help us achieve our aims.

How can I help...?

by...

- getting involved in serving tea and coffee before the morning service or helping at the information desk.
- inviting someone to your home for Sunday lunch even on a monthly basis.
- supporting each other in the church family and being alert to people in need.
- keeping a look out for others who usually sit near you on a Sunday. If someone's not at church for a couple of Sundays, then why not find out why and notify an elder or our Minister.
- becoming part of our Care Team being willing to visit one or two housebound people on a regular basis.
- helping with the practical arrangements in running a course such as a marriage or parenting course.
- volunteering for Helping Hands i.e. being willing to give a lift to hospital, weed a garden, take something to the dump, putting together some flat-pack furniture etc.

- providing a meal for someone or even food for a freezer which we could take to someone experiencing difficulty, or help with catering at funerals.
- 'staffing' the opening of the vestibule one morning per week.
- being involved in getting Men of Ballyloughan or the Girl's Nights Out idea off the ground again.



Serving



Serving God by using our abilities, time, money and possessions for Him.

Imagine...?

a church with everyone having a selfless, servant heart and where we are mobilised, equipped and encouraged to use our gifts to the best of our ability for God.

How do we get there...?

- provide Bible teaching on Jesus' call and example of sacrificial service.
- inform the congregation of organisations and ministries that take place and opportunities to serve so that people actively seek out opportunities to help.
- match every organisation with an elder who has the responsibility to support, pray, encourage and provide a key link with Kirk Session.
- support those in leadership of adult, youth and children's activities by corporate and private prayer, encouragement and thanks.
- identify and arrange necessary and relevant training for those engaged in serving.

How can I help...?

by...

- making yourself available to help and serve whenever and wherever possible, even if you feel the role may not be of great significance.
- offering a skill, experience or talent that you have which you feel may be useful in Ballyloughan.
- offering to serve in one of our existing organisations.

- helping to create a community of encouragement by speaking a word or dropping a brief note of encouragement to someone you see faithfully serving.
- praying regularly for those in leadership and all who are serving.
- maintaining and where possible increasing your practical and financial support so that the church's work is not hindered by lack of resources.



Engaging



Engaging with our community and beyond with the radical love and message of Jesus.

Imagine...?

a body of individuals committed to seeing the people in our lives and in our communities develop a deep and lasting relationship with Jesus.

How do we get there...?

Equip our People... (our hearts and our skills)

- provide teaching, training and challenge in relational evangelism at least every 2 years through our public teaching, as well as offering members an annual opportunity to have refresher training in relational evangelism.
- address in our teaching some of the key questions / objections that people have about the Christian faith.
- provide resources to encourage and equip our members in sharing and defending their faith.

Develop our Programmes...

...which make contact with people

- produce publicity material to share the gospel and further promote the organisations and activities that we currently run which people can pass on.
- carry out regular door-to-door visitation in our community.
- organise occasional special 'interest' events such as seminars on a particular theme or life issue.
- organise a special 'connect' season where as a church we aim to show the love of Jesus to our local community and during which we hold events to which we can invite friends, family, and the local community (a development of our Church has left the building programme).
- organise special weeks for children and young people such as Holiday Bible Club, football coaching.

...which build relationships with people

- befriend those who have some contact with our organisations and activities who have no church connection, as well as those who express openness through our door to door work.
- as relationships are built, open up our church buildings for people to drop into during the week.
- meet practical needs when we can.

...which discuss Jesus with people

- continue with our Alpha Course or similar course each year.
- run occasional evangelistic events during the year to which members are encouraged to bring their friends.
- develop an appropriate small group for those in our local community who wish to explore Christianity.
- continue our Scripture Union group in Dunclug Primary School.

Develop our Partnerships

- occasionally join with other local churches to pray for our community.
- explore whether there are things we could do together with other churches in the local community, instead of doing them apart.

Develop our team...

- establish an Engaging team to develop, steer and promote our evangelism.
- employ an outreach worker by September 2011 to assist us in achieving our aims.

How can I help...?

by...

- being intentional at wanting to share Jesus with your friends and having a desire to develop skills at doing this.
- becoming part of our door-to-door team visiting local homes.

- getting involved in our special 'connect' season by carrying out a practical task for someone, helping plan an event for men, women or families.
- providing a few groceries for someone in the local community who would greatly appreciate them.
- helping with special summer outreach activities including Holiday Bible Club or Football in Action.
- inviting friends to some of our special events or our Alpha Course.
- getting involved in helping with Alpha.

More details on this engaging section can be found in our 'Mission Plan' document which is available from the information desk.

Imagine...Getting involved!

Thank you for all that so many of you do in Ballyloughan already, and for taking the time to read this booklet.

Perhaps you've read this booklet and it has prompted you to **consider** the part that you can play in serving Jesus. There have been lots of ways highlighted in this booklet in which you can serve. Consider how you can serve with the gifts that God has given YOU. Big or small, young or not so young, He has made us all and He gave each one of us gifts and talents. Everyone. Not just some and not others. EVERYONE.
Including **YOU**.

Do something about it. Talk to someone. Act on an idea. Fill in the tear off form below and put it in the box marked "I would like to help" in the vestibule.

I would like to help...

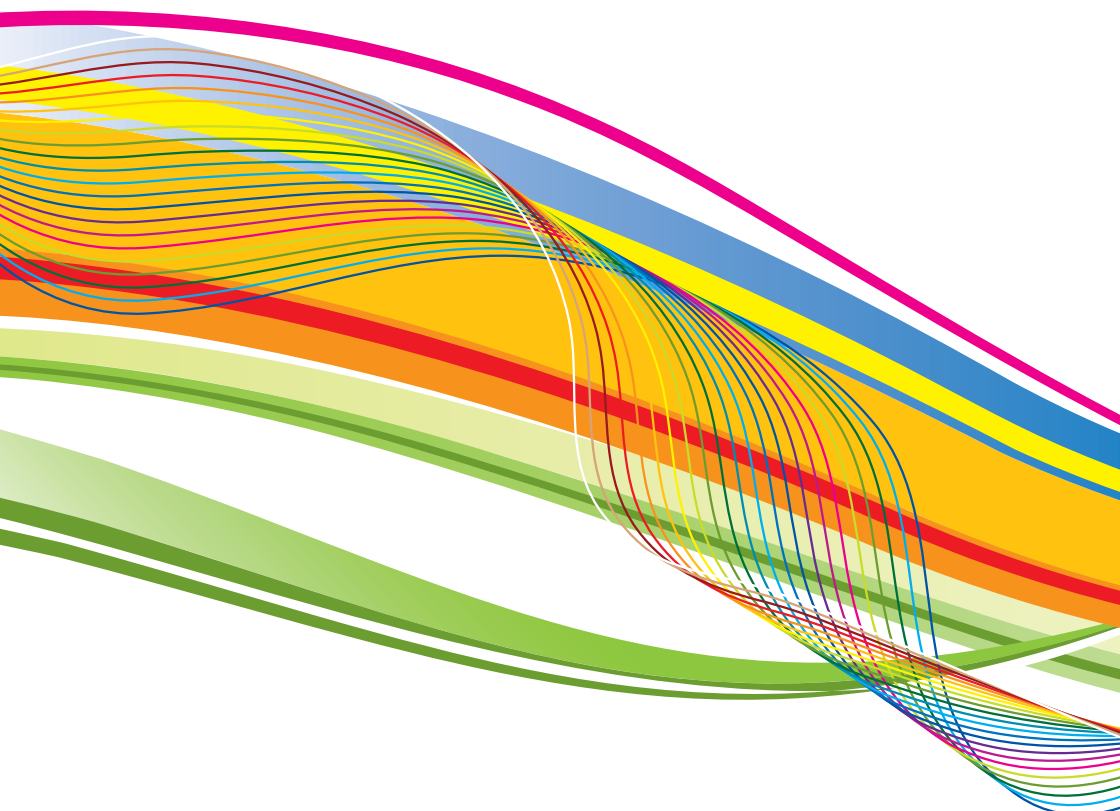
My name: _____

My tel. no: _____

I may be able to help in the following way:

Please get in touch with me with further information.

**Please fill in, then return to the box marked
'I would like to help' in the vestibule**



Ballyloughan Presbyterian Church
88 Doury Road
Ballymena
BT43 6JE

t: 028 2564 8502
e: office@ballyloughanchurch.org.uk
www.ballyloughanchurch.org.uk