

A photograph of the Clonduff Presbyterian Church, a simple rectangular building with a gabled roof and two arched doorways. The church is surrounded by a white wall and a hedge. The sky is blue with some clouds. The text "CLONDUFF PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH" is overlaid in large, bold, black letters, and "CHURCH PROFILE" is overlaid in a slightly smaller, bold, black font below it.

**CLONDUFF  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH**

**CHURCH PROFILE**

# Clonduff Presbyterian Church

## Church Profile

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# 1. History

## a) Local churches

The congregation of Clonduff came into being in early 1840. Nothing is known of how the congregation came to be formed, however before the Clonduff fellowship came into being the local population would have most likely worshipped in Rathfriland or Ballyrone. In order to reach their destination most people would have had to walk. Anyone who attended Ballyrone at least would have a good rest before returning home since, Public Worship usually began at 12 noon and finished at 4.00 p.m. in the summertime and 3.00 p.m. in the winter.

The first mention of the congregation of Clonduff can be found in a paragraph in the "News Telegraph" of 28th March 1840. This records how a deputation from the newly formed congregation waited for the Marquis of Downshire at his castle in Hillsborough. The purpose of this visit was "to solicit his Lordship's approval of a site for a meetinghouse and a subscription towards the cost of the building."

The article continues "His Lordship received the deputation in the most kind and courteous manner, and having expressed his readiness to co-operate with his Presbyterian tenantry in expressing the blessing of the Gospel through the country, gave his approval of the site and added the handsome subscription of £100 towards the building." At this stage the congregation was in connection with the Synod of Ulster and belonged to the Newry Presbytery.

After the formation of the congregation and until the church was built, the members met in the old school at the bottom of the lane which is nowadays locally known as "The Manse Lane".

On 5 May 1840 the congregation asked Presbytery to arrange for a committee to meet with them in order to fix the dimensions of their place of worship and name a time for laying the foundation stone.

## b) Clonduff Church Built

Friday, 10th July 1840 was one of the most important dates in Northern Ireland church history as "The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland," was formed.

While this great event took place in the city, the small country congregation of Clonduff was striving to build their new church. When completed the church could probably have seated around 300 people, however since then a number of pews have been removed during various alterations and until recently would have seated approximately 200.

While the congregation commenced in the old Newry Presbytery it was subsequently transferred to the Rathfriland Presbytery where it remained until 1962. At this juncture the Banbridge and Rathfriland Presbyteries united to form the Presbytery of Iveagh. On the 21<sup>st</sup> June 1842, Rev. James Steen, formerly a minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, was installed and in the same year the church was opened for public worship by Rev. Henry Cooke, LL.D., minister of May Street Church, Belfast who was also the Moderator of the General Assembly at the time. No exact date is known as to when the church was officially opened, but no doubt the people of the congregation were justly proud of their new church building.

### c) Church buildings, hall and church renovation



*Picture of church and old schoolhouse in early 1960s*

In 1990 a new hall was opened on the site of the old schoolhouse. This building went into immediate use and with PW, Daniel's Band, midweeks, Bowls, GB, Youth Club and evening services being held throughout the winter months, there are usually no nights where some work is not ongoing in the hall.

In September 2013, the congregation embarked on an ambitious project to renovate the church building. It is hoped to complete this work by Easter 2014 with new floors, pews, heating, lighting, a new vestibule, replacement gallery, audio-visual systems and renovation work on the rear committee room, kitchen and toilets. This is an exciting time for the Clonduff members and all are enthusiastic about meeting in an almost new, comfortable, warm, bright building which is well suited to the worship of God.



*Clonduff Church and hall 2012*



## 2. Local population and congregation profile

### a) Local population figures

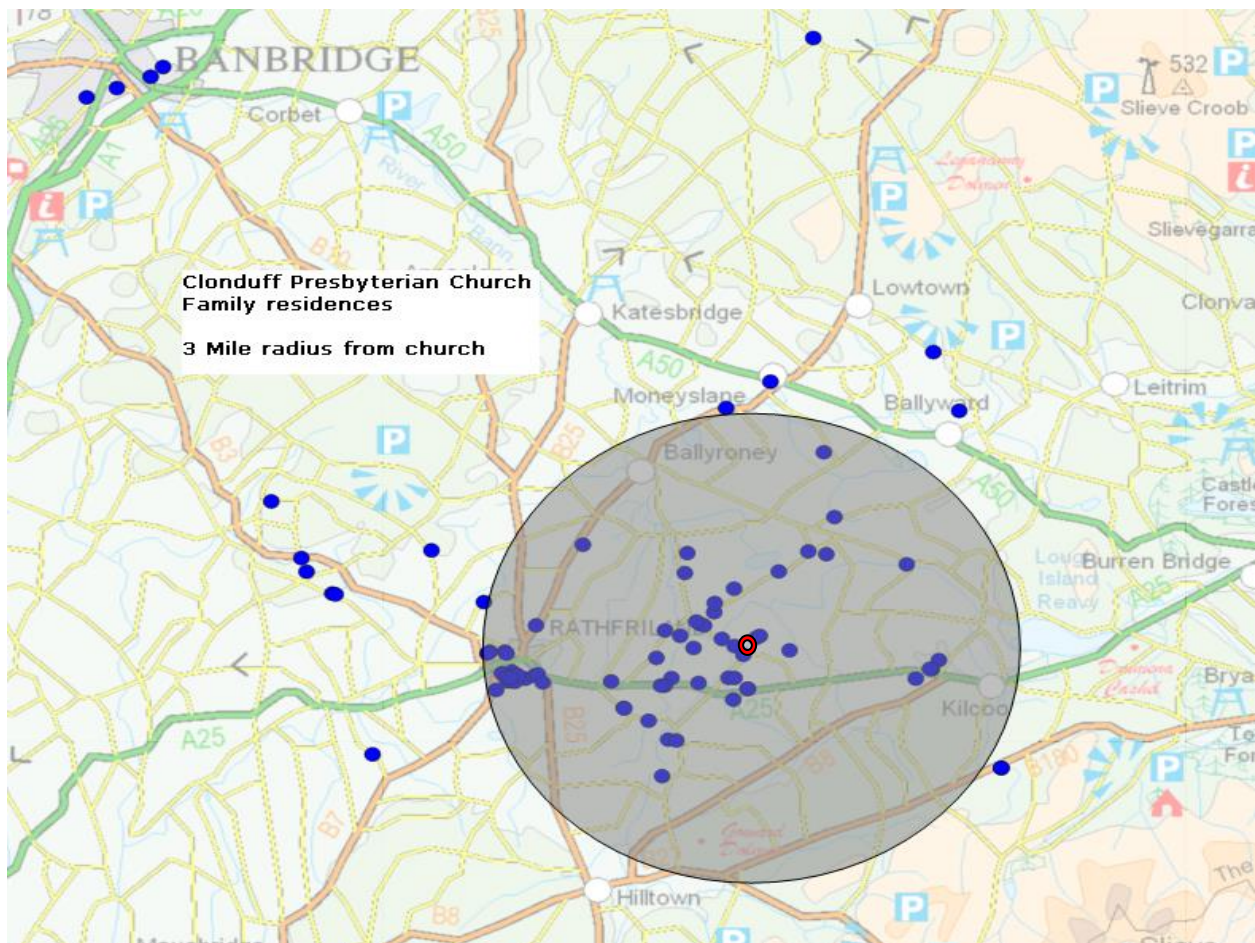
Statistical records of the local schools at the commencement of Clonduff church, would indicate that a large percentage of the local population were already Presbyterians. Records of 1836 show that in the local schools of Lisnisk and Ballynagappoge the majority of pupils were Presbyterian as follows:

Name of School	Total Pupils	No. Presbyterians
Ballynagappoge	32	26
Lisnisk	104	87

Most of the families living in the local area would have been involved in the farming industry. At one point it was believed that in two laneways close to the church, Bann Lane and Manse Lane, over 20 families were residing, however there are presently only 5 families now living in those lanes.

Of the families currently associated with Clonduff, 78% reside within a 3 mile radius of the church with only 3 full time farmers in the congregation. (See map below).

### b) Map showing Clonduff families locations.



### c) Historical membership figures.

The historical profile of the church shows steady numbers through the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Year	Members	Marriages	Baptisms
1850		6	4
1870		6	14
1890	221		7
1910	224	2	5
1950	186		7
1970	190		6
1990	134		4
2010	123	2	2

The current congregational profile shows that overall numbers remain steady, however the number of communicant numbers has decreased in recent years. Of the 85 families currently associated with the church, 56 (66%) have regular attendees and 29 (34%) are nominally attached.

Of the approximate 185 adults associated with the church, 26% attend weekly, a further 24% attend regularly, a further 16% attend infrequently and 34% do not attend. (See table below.)

### d) Current attendance profiles.

Category	Sub Total	Total	Percentage
Attend weekly - fully involved	36		
Attend weekly - not involved	13	49	26%
Attend regularly - involved	13		
Attend regularly - not involved	31	44	24%
Attend infrequently	30	30	16%
Don't attend	62	62	34%
	185		

**e) Age profiles and attendance figures of congregation.**

The following table shows a breakdown of current persons with church associations by age group and attendance category.

Category expansion	Age bracket											Grand Total	%
	00-10	10-18	18-25	25-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	60-70	70-80	80-90	90-100		
Attend weekly - fully involved			1		9	7	9	7	1	2		36	14.1%
Attend weekly - not involved			1		5	1	2	1	2	1		13	5.1%
Attend regularly - involved					8		3	2				13	5.1%
Attend regularly - not involved			2	2	7	5	3	6	2	4		31	12.2%
Attend infrequently			2	2	8	5	2	6	1	3	1	30	11.8%
Don't attend			8	5	17	8	7	10	1	6		62	24.3%
Child - attends each week	19	12										31	12.2%
Child - attends regularly	10	1										11	4.3%
Child - attends infrequently	5	1										6	2.4%
Child - Don't attend	3	13										16	6.3%
Student - attends when at home			3									3	1.2%
Student - attends sometimes			3									3	1.2%
	37	27	20	9	54	26	26	32	7	16	1	255	
All persons	64		20	115				56				255	
	25%		8%	45%				22%					
Regular attendees	42		4	61				28				135	
	31%		3%	45%				21%					

The above shows that over 30% of persons with a church association do not attend. A further 14.2% attend infrequently.

Of the regular attendees, 21% is aged 60 or over.

#### **f) Local Demographic statistics.**

The NINIS (Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service) states in the 2011 census that the electoral ward in which the church is situated (Spelga) has a population which is 85.01% brought up in the catholic religion with just over 13% in the protestant faith.

However most of Clonduff church families reside within the Rathfriland ward. Within this area the percentage ascribing to the protestant faith stands at 56.82% with 38.54% in the catholic tradition.

The Rathfriland ward also shows that 58.76% of people were in paid employment with only 4.32% unemployed.

Figures would suggest that within our congregation, of those of employable age, approximately 86% are either employed or self employed.



### **3. Current church profile**

#### **a) Joint charge**

Since 1966 Clonduff has been in a joint charge with our neighbours in Hilltown. This is a union which works well with common organisations such as Daniel's Band, Girls Brigade, Youth Club and Youth Fellowship sharing leadership. Evening services, midweek bible study and prayer meetings are combined and also on special occasions such as Easter and Christmas, morning services are joined. It is also feasible that during the summer months, some of the morning worship services are held together with meetings being held at alternate locations.

#### **b) Manse**

The minister resides in the manse associated with Hilltown church at 16 Main Street Hilltown.



*Hilltown Manse*

#### **c) Brief outline of mission plan**

While the tables in the previous section (2d & e2) have a number of categories, where eternity is concerned there are only two categories of people, those who are saved and those who are lost. God is 'not willing that any should perish' (2Peter 3:9) so it is into this situation, area and demographic that Clonduff Presbyterian Church seeks to bring an effective, relevant witness for the Christian faith.

The eldership and fellow workers of the congregation seek to uphold the primary purpose of Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross as the only means of salvation. In John chapter 3 Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Jude verse 23 states that we should, "Be

merciful to those who doubt; save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear – hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.” We seek as first Corinthians 9:22f states to, “... have become all things to all people so that by all possible means we might save some.”

It is the aim of the church leadership to :-

***‘Bring Glory to God and serve the community through biblically based living. presenting Jesus Christ as our only means of salvation’***

To this end the mission of Clonduff incorporates several effective areas of witness:-

Worship  
Fellowship,  
Discipleship,  
Prayer  
Evangelism,  
Service

(See Church mission plan for details on above areas)

## **c) Services**

### **i) Sunday morning worship**

Our morning services are at 10.45 am and are preceded by Sunday School. This is usually the best attended service and follows a normal service format. A rota of 'welcomers' greet worshippers and distribute announcement sheets if available. The musical accompaniment is usually piano with guitar, bass guitar and drums. A mix of traditional and modern songs are used with our choir leading the praise. The children come to the front of the church for a talk specific to them after which they leave for children's church with crèche also provided for babies and younger children. The preaching of God's Word is of course central to the service as those attending our service are challenged regarding their urgent need of salvation. A cup of tea is usually served in the hall afterwards. Special services are held at various times throughout the year, these include:-

- Children's day
- Harvest Sunday
- PW service.
- Remembrance Day service
- Christmas day service

### **ii) Sunday evening worship**

Our evening services are joint with Hilltown and are at 6.30 pm in alternate locations. They are preceded by a time of prayer from 6.00 pm and a short time of praise and worship is led by our praise team from approximately 6.20. This is a more informal service and has traditionally been well attended, however numbers have diminished slightly in recent years. The evening services are often utilised to allow the church organisations to hold services and give thanks for the blessings of their ministries. These services include:

- Youth Fellowship service
- Youth Club service
- Daniel's band service
- Young people reporting on summer activities.
- GB Enrolment service
- Carol service

### **iii) Midweek fellowship**

Midweeks are joint with Hilltown in alternate locations and are mainly for teaching and prayer. Guest speakers are sometimes invited from missionary organisations to update on current ministries.

## **d) Organisations**

### **i) Sunday School**

Sunday School continues to be our most important youth work giving committed leaders the opportunity to teach children the Word of God and tell them of His love for them. The Sunday School meets before church on Sunday mornings at 0945 from September to June and follow carefully prepared lessons to ensure the children are made aware of their value in Jesus' eyes and their value and importance to the congregation. An annual Christmas party is held and a fun day is usually held at the end of the Sunday School year. The highlight of the Sunday School year is the annual Children's Day services where our young people have the opportunity to lead the services, give thanks and sing praises to our great God.

### **ii) Daniel's band**

Daniel's Band is a joint venture with our sister congregation in Hilltown for children of primary school age. The children meet on Tuesday nights in Clonduff Hall at 7.00 pm with a variety of activities organised for their enjoyment. The central purpose is the clear presentation of the gospel for the children and this is usually in the form of a talk by one of the leaders although there are occasions where others will be invited to perform this important task. Crafts, games and other fun activities are enjoyed by the children and this work has been blessed through the years with many children accepting Jesus as their Saviour. The attendees are not only from our churches but also from the local community including quite a few from Rathfriland.

### **iii) Girls' brigade**

The girl's Brigade continues to provide an opportunity to build relationships with young girls of all age groups and for the leaders to show the love of Christ through their commitment to the work and also through direct witness and testimony. The numbers attending have increased again in recent years and the strength of the company is in knowing that each girl is special and is valued not only to the leaders but to Jesus Christ. They are encouraged to 'Seek, serve and follow Christ' through various activities and services. Again, many of the girls do not have a Clonduff or Hilltown congregational background, so this is a good witness into the local community.

### **iv) Youth Club**

Youth Club meets on Saturday night catering for age groups from 7 to 20. Various activities are engaged including football, table-tennis, unihoc, pool, table games, volleyball etc. The club has seen thousands of young people pass through during its current form and each week a short epilogue is given to present the gospel through generation relevant illustrations. Many have come to faith as a result of this work with some now involved in leadership roles within the club. The majority of attendees are from the local community (mainly Rathfriland) with most coming from a non-church background.

### **v) Youth fellowship**

It is from this organisation that we would most hope to see the next generation of youth leaders progress. The current leaders work hard at building and maintaining relationships ensuring that the attendees understand the importance of their faith in coping with the challenges of teenage and young adult years.

### **vi) Presbyterian Women**

Our PW meet on the first Monday of each month. As usual, the ladies of the congregation do a tremendous work in our congregations, from supporting missions, praying faithfully, providing fellowship opportunities, practical pastoral care etc. Guest speakers bring fresh challenges and encouragements each month.

### **vii) Bowls Club**

Our bowlers usually meet on Thursday night and share fun and fellowship together while annoying themselves with the game of bowls. There is a healthy camaraderie in the club and matches are played against other churches in the South Down area. These are enjoyable and friendly encounters with many opportunities to share our faith while competing and then sharing a cup of tea.

## **4. Finances**

The 2013 report shows a church income of approximately £740 per contributing family which compares favourably with other churches in the presbytery.

Other sources of income from bequests enhance the Minister's stipend by almost £6500 per annum (2013 report) and the nearby Manse and associated farm, which was bequeathed to the church over 30 years ago, also generates a level of income for church funds.

## **5. Conclusion**

Clonduff Presbyterian Church exists to lead people to saving faith in Jesus, to bring them to maturity within the fellowship, and to encourage them to worship God in Spirit and in Truth leading to lives of service.