

“The Whole Gospel, for the Whole Person, with the Whole Church, in the Whole World”

The History of Fisherwick

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we welcome you to our church. Please take time to look round the building, learn something of our work and take a little time to pray.

Fisherwick Place Church was founded in the early nineteenth century (1823) when it was one of four Presbyterian congregations in the city of Belfast. The original church was situated in Fisherwick Place and a photographs of the exterior and interior are below. The original photographs can be seen in the Session room.

By the end of the nineteenth century Belfast had expanded and the population had moved to the suburbs. In 1897 the Fisherwick Place congregation agreed to sell their building to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to provide a site for their headquarters and to move to the present site on the Malone Road.

An architectural competition was held, which was won by S P Close, and this is the building you are now standing in. The church is in the neo-Gothic style, typical of the late Victorian/Edwardian period. Unusually for a Presbyterian church it is cruciform in shape.

The building was opened in 1901 and since then a number of refurbishments have taken place, altering the internal layout. The two most significant of these were in 1967 and 2004-6. The first saw the insertion of the central aisle, the addition of a pulpit canopy. The second saw the removal of some pews at the rear to provide more flexible space for conversation. The Tea

Point and the Resources Area were added. New lighting was installed, the interior re-plastered and repainted, the side chapels were created and a new stained glass window and modern artwork were installed.

Fisherwick gathers its congregation from a wide area across Belfast and beyond. It has a varied programme to cater for a wide age range from our senior members to our children and toddlers. The church has a strong and varied musical tradition, including choral music and more contemporary.

Fisherwick has always been a congregation that has looked outwards. It has throughout its history been actively involved in God's work overseas, both by members of the congregation serving abroad and by generous giving. It is also active in the local community through links with other local churches and a social outreach programme.

To follow the tour below, start at the entrance of the church and move to your right (ie., move around the church in an anticlockwise direction):

The Candlestick of Peace was presented to the church by the United Reformed Church, Brislington, USA. It recalls a visit of American Christians to the former USSR: after a service in an Orthodox Church an old lady pressed three roubles into the hand of the Pastor leading the group, Dr. Blair Monie, and asked him to buy a candle and light it during a ceremony in his church, as a symbol of peace. A little later, members of the congregation of Dr. Monie (First Presbyterian Church, York, Pennsylvania) sent candlesticks to other churches that would repeat and extend this gesture of peace.

The Bishops' Bible in the glass case (made by Eddie McCormick) dates from 1568. It was given to the church by Col. Fred Crawford to mark the opening of the church in 1901.

Above the Resources Centre is the first of Helen Sanlon's artworks – it celebrates the Word and the Spirit. The windows in the side aisles are original Edwardian decorative glass.

As you turn to look towards the back of the church Helen Sanlon's piece the Bread and the Wine are above the tea point. The theme common to this

piece and the piece above the Resource Centre is through the Word and Sacrament of Communion – ‘Taste and see that God is good’.

At the end of the aisle you come to the south transept - the Memorial Chapel. Dominating the Chapel is a splendid stained glass window by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, depicting the Incarnation and the Nativity. The window is a memorial to Frank McCaughey and his wife Sarah Remington Charles and was installed by their family in 1930.

In the Chapel note the unusual wrought ironwork of the First World War Memorial, the memorials to Rev. John Waddell, Sir Robert and Lady Anderson, Sir James Musgrave and Thomas Doig. A large brass memorial lists the substantial donors to the building of the church and a brass cross lists names of missionaries sent by the congregation overseas. The absence

of recent names reflects the change in the pattern of mission work, as people now go abroad on short-term service.

Take the door in the corner of the Chapel onto the Session Room. In almost 190 years Fisherwick has only had eight ministers!

Previous Ministers

Rev. Dr. James Morgan
(1828-1873)

Rev. Dr. Henry Williamson
(1870-1898)

Rev. Dr. Charles Davey
(1900-1919)

Rev John Waddell
(1920-1945)



Rev. Dr. Jack Withers
(1946-1972)

Rev. Dr. David Lapsley
(1973-1993)

Rev Dr Derek McKelvey
(1994-2013).

Rev Michael Anderson
(2013-2019)

The Chancel forms a very gracious focal point of the church, immediately attracting the eye.

The Communion Table and the Pulpit are superbly carved and their position reflects the reformed tradition in which the word and the sacrament are equally important. The Baptismal Font the other significant item in worship is made of Portland stone.

The Organ, made by Walker, is considered to be one of the best in Ireland. It was installed in 1901 and since then has had many additions and modifications. It has 10 'speaking stops' on the 'great' organ, 11 on the 'swell' and 9 'pedal stops'. It has been brought up to concert pitch.

The panelling and the choir stalls are the congregation's memorial to those who died and those who served in the Second World War. The oak-panelled memorial was installed in 1949; at the same time the choir stalls were placed in antiphonal position.

The oldest stained glass windows are the two in the centre of the choir. They are dedicated to the first two ministers of the congregation – to the left Dr. Morgan and to the right Dr. Williamson. The other windows were added between 1920 and 1940 and are dedicated to Dr. Davey, M. Henry Musgrave, Mr. And Mrs. Acheson Ferguson and Mr. Alexander Bulloch.

Moving to the north transept you are in the Prayer Chapel. The Chapel and the artwork throughout the church were made possible by a legacy from Miss Marjorie Edwards, a former Clerk of Session.

The layout of the chapel and the wooden screens were designed by John Baird. The North Window is Edwardian hand-painted glass, now quite rare.

Under the window is one of Helen Sanlon's pieces of art – the Tree of Life – producing fruit in all seasons depicted against a background of the Ulster countryside. Hidden in the fields are verses of scripture indicating our desire to plant God's word deep in this land.

The scene of sky and sea depicting God's Creation masks a listing of the many names of God. The hand-woven carpet, designed by Helen Sanlon and made by Donegal Carpets, depicts a cross – but is also a set of stepping-stones across water into the presence of God symbolised on gold. The leaves of the Tree of life swirl in the water. We hope that you will take a little time to rest and pray in the Chapel.

The modern stained glass window was installed in 2006. It depicts the Resurrection – in the background is the cross, now empty, and from the bottom left ascends the vibrant Resurrection life, at first quietly known to only a few, but expands as it rises, into the ever wider world. It was designed by Ann Smith of CWS Glass. It is a memorial to Mr. Fred Poskitt and his family.

The two pieces of Helen Sanlon's art work 'the Word and the Spirit' and 'the Bread and the Wine' draw the eye to the West Window. It is by W.F. Clokey and was installed in memory of Mr. John Bodell in 1956. A notable feature of the window is the portrayal of workers and craftsmen in the industries of Ulster.

In the Vestibule the illuminated dove represents the Holy Spirit and was a gift from University Presbyterian Church, Seattle, USA in 1976.

The bust of Dr. Morgan and the memorial plaques on the wall were brought from the original Fisherwick Place building in 1902.

During recent years the church has undergone substantial renovations and alternations, completing a £2.3m building project in 2019.

We hope to see you in the church to view "in person" what you have read and seen on this page. Please take the time to visit us. You will be made most welcome.