

BOARD OF SOCIAL WITNESS

Convener: Rev RA LIDDLE

Secretary: Mr LINDSAY CONWAY, OBE

THE BOARD AT A GLANCE:

- 20 locations
- 445 bed spaces
- 428 staff
- 200 volunteers
- £8 + million operational budget

AREAS OF WORK:

- **Residential Care** – Older People & Learning Disability
- **Nursing Care** – Older People
- **Working with people with Addictions**
- **Working with Offenders**
- **Supported Housing** – Older People & Learning Disability
- **Student Accommodation**
- **Counselling Service**
- **Child Protection** – Training, Advice & Support
- **Chaplains** – Hospital, Hospice, University & Forces
- **Ministry to the Deaf**
- **Family Centre** – Young Families, Older People, School Children & Homeless
- **Lobbying & Campaigning**

In Summary:

1. The following reports outline the work and activities of a busy Board, a Board that fulfills the Social Care functions of our denomination. This year the Board is “Celebrating Service”, a theme that focuses on the positive aspects of the Board’s work and does not dwell on the “doom and gloom” in the social care world and the threatened round of budget cuts. The Board is blessed on a daily basis as it serves and meets the needs of so many individuals.

2. **Specialist Ministries:** reports on the on-going work of Chaplains, working in Criminal Justice, Health Care, Education and with the Armed Forces. The appointment of a new Minister in the Kinghan Church will be reported.

3. **Older People Services:** reports on the extensive work carried out in Residential and Nursing Homes and stresses the difficult time this sector is experiencing in the whole climate of cuts.

4. **Family Services:** reports on the proposed work of the new Disability, Health and Wellbeing Committee, PCI Counselling, PCI Holiday and Taking Care. The new committee will begin to address some of the wider issues of disability and mental health. Getting Onboard, a new project, will have been launched in two Presbytery areas.

5. **Adult Services:** reports on the work of Thompson House, Carlisle House, Grays Court and the work of the Addiction Services Committee. The replacement of Thompson House will be a major focus for the next two plus years.

BOARD REPORT

Strategic Objective 1

“The Board shall deliver an effective service to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the wider community.”

“Celebrating Service”

1. In the current economic situation many people can identify with the Apostle Paul when he talked about being ‘hard pressed on every side!’ As they look forward and wonder how to overcome present difficulties, they can understand Paul’s feeling ‘perplexed.’ Of course that’s only one side of the coin and the opposite side from hope. What Paul actually wrote was, “We are hard pressed on every side, *but not crushed*; perplexed, *but not in despair*.” 2 Cor. 4v8

2. The Board of Social Witness faces many challenges. In some areas of the work the Board may be considered hard-pressed and there are perplexing problems, but those who serve with the Board are neither crushed nor in despair. With money tight it is easy to panic or to lose sight of God’s calling. At such times it is necessary to look again at what God is doing and to focus on Jesus who is the beginner and finisher of faith.

3. It is gratifying to hear families talk about elderly relatives finding the Board’s Older People Services units a real home in which they are loved and cared for. Also how former residents talk about Carlisle House being a place in which they are not treated like addicts but as human beings with dignity.

4. It’s not just about money, it’s about people! *People matter to God!* People in need; people who need to see the love of Christ before they can hear about the love of Christ; people who need to be treated with dignity, compassion and care. It is about people giving themselves selflessly to care. In many of the Board’s units staff went over and above the call of duty to care for residents during the severe winter snows and water shortages. One member of staff even brought in a sleeping bag in case she was unable to get back home. The care and love freely given by the staff of Aaron House when a long term resident died during the year was like a family gathering round to share the grief.

5. Being hard-pressed need not lead to being crushed. Facing perplexity need not end in despair, for God is a great God. He calls, He equips and He provides. Celebrating the good news stories, celebrating what God has given and what He is doing is the antidote to despair. Day-by-day, in Congregations and projects, it is both possible and right to celebrate service and, ‘*To Live out the Love of Christ through a Caring Church within our Communities.*’

6. As it plans for the year ahead and comes to the end of its Strategic Plan, 2007-2012, the Board is very much aware of the difficult cuts that will impact on its frontline services over the next few years. Funding issues may

result in a crisis within its overall operation, leading to a reduction of services and staff, something it would want to avoid at all costs. The Board is totally convinced that the substantive issue is underfunding and not overspending. Commissioners and funders of services are endeavouring to meet the demands of so many and where possible reduce the impact of the cuts. The complexity of the budgeting process and the high standards set by the regulatory bodies place major pressures on the providers of services. The Board operates in a number of specialist areas – Family and Child Care, Older People Services, Criminal Justice, Learning Disability, Addictions, Mental Health, Disability, Chaplaincy to name a few.

7. The Code, Par 281(2)(a), states - The Board shall: “concern itself with all questions affecting the social welfare of the members of the Church and the community, and all questions affecting Church and industry, except such as are otherwise provided for by the Assembly and may undertake activities to further the Church’s witness in these fields”. For generations the Board has adhered to the demands that the General Assembly have placed on it and followed the Biblical imperative of “Loving your neighbour”. The development of the Board’s activities clearly shows that it responds to the needs of individuals, Congregations or the wider denomination, reluctant to promote new work in the Board’s own right. The profile of the work reflects another time in the Board’s history, work has been renamed, relocated and at times followed a different path.

8. The voluntary/community/faith sector continues to supplement the statutory sector and government knows that the Board will reluctantly close its doors or refuse admission to anyone. Challenges and opportunities will arise during this period of recession both at Board and local levels. Ministers and Elders will experience a higher demand on their time as they respond to more and more pastoral needs as a result of local services being cut. Considerable stress will be experienced at congregational level when individual care packages are reduced, elective surgery is postponed or cancelled, treatment or medication is denied, the scenarios are endless.

9. The Prime Minister in launching his “Big Society” initiative stated:-
“I’ve been saying for the last four-and-a-half years that I want to empower the voluntary sector, social enterprises, social capital, the Big Society – all the things that can actually help us build a stronger and bigger society in Britain. I can’t think of a better way of empowering you than actually starting by sitting you round the Cabinet table, in power effectively. Also today, we are publishing the first part of our coalition agreement. It’s a very comprehensive coalition agreement between the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives, and I think it’s a big signal that the first part that we publish is actually that part about the Big Society – about decentralising power, about empowering communities, about all the work that you do to help build the big, strong society that we want to see here in the United Kingdom.”

10. Throughout the Board’s history it has connected with communities at times of great social need; a “Big Society” model, both at denominational level and at a local level through the work of Congregations. Time and time again the Church shows the love of Christ in practical ways, by individuals giving freely

of their time and skills. The Christian Community is witnessing real growth in major initiatives within local communities – Redeeming Our Communities, Street Pastors, the formation of a Community Faith Forum. People of God must play their part to influence legislation and policy.

11. Debra Green in her book “Redeeming our Communities – 21st Century Miracles of Social Transformation” writes – “What’s needed is not just a New Reformation that makes the Word of God more accessible, we also need a revival of faith fuelled activism that makes the heart of God more visible”. The “Faith Economy” reflects a massive investment of those who give freely of their time, both in Church based activities and as volunteers in wider community life. Convert those volunteer hours into a wage and the Churches are putting hundreds of thousands into the economy. Social Witness must be visible in Congregations and in the life and work of the Board. If the Church fails to respond to the increasing needs of its communities, it is failing in its Christian duty to “love your neighbour”.

THANKS

12. With real gratitude the Board celebrates the service on the frontline of the work; the more than four hundred staff in the office, projects, local support committees, Board and Assembly Committees and Panels. In particular the Board continues to be grateful for the wisdom and experience of the Secretary and Director of Social Service, Lindsay Conway, who regularly carries more than one or even two jobs.

13. The Board serves a wide range of people and meets a wide range of needs due to the dedicated skills and commitment of more than 400 staff who work in homes, projects and in the BSW Office in Church House. A large thank you is also due to the many who serve so faithfully on the Board’s numerous Committees and Panels, and to the Board Convener, the Rev Bobby Liddle.

14. The Board is grateful to be able to work so closely with a wide range of statutory and public agencies which work with the Board as it seeks to minister to a broad range of needs in society. To Department of Health, Social Service and Public Safety; Supporting People (Northern Ireland Housing Executive); Probation Board of Northern Ireland; Northern Ireland Prison Service; Access (NI); Police Service of Northern Ireland; Garda Síochána; partner Housing Associations; Department of Education and many others grateful thanks are extended for their continued funding and support.

15. A special word of thanks goes to those within the Presbyterian Family; to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, Financial Secretary, Head of Personnel, Presbyterian Women, Information Officer and their staff teams and to the United Appeal Board for their funding and support. It has also been good to be part of a much closer co-operation and consultation between Boards and the Board of Social Witness expresses its thanks to all the Board Conveners and Secretaries. Invitations to visit Presbyteries and Congregations to inform of the Board’s work are always appreciated and thanks are due to all such for their support.

SPECIALIST MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

Strategic Objective 2

“Specialist Ministries shall promote and support the work of Chaplains and the Churches ministry to the Deaf Community.”

1. The ministry of the Health Care and Prison Chaplains plays a significant role in the life and work of the Church. The Chaplains Committee is having to deal with a wide range of issues that are symptomatic of this period of recession, many of the proposed cuts will impact directly on the lives of patients and prisoners. Many patients, prisoners’ families and staff welcome ministry from our Chaplains at an uncertain and fragile time in their lives.

2. The Committee commends the Forces Chaplains to the prayers of the Church. They share the risks of service personnel in various conflict zones having to minister to the traumatised, as well as dealing with their own personal traumas related to these conflicts. It remembers too their families and surrounds them in its prayers.

3. The Chaplains within the world of Education provide a valuable resource to students who are having to contend with the pressure of fees and proposed cuts, on top of the everyday pressures and strains of student life.

4. During the year the Committee welcomed two new Conveners – the Rev Dr Victor Dobbin (Forces Committee) and the Rev Marlene Taylor (Chaplains Committee). The Rev Karen Mbayo was appointed Chaplain at Queen’s University and the Rev Glen Jordan was appointed Assistant to the Convener of the Kinghan Church.

Health Care and Prison Chaplains

5. The Committee is aware that there are major changes in the whole area of recruitment and procedures within the Health Trusts. Under the old system the Church nominated Chaplains to the Trusts; now the Trusts advertise and recruit, though in consultation with the Churches.

6. The Committee is concerned that ministers are finding difficulty in gaining access to wards in some hospitals. There is presently no standard access guidance across the Hospital Trusts; if necessary the Committee will agree a joint protocol with the Department of Health. ID badges for hospital Chaplains may be a solution.

7. A new Code of Conduct has been launched by the UK Board of Healthcare Chaplaincy Association. The Code was launched by the Health Minister, Mr Michael McGimpsey MLA. In launching the Code the Minister gave his support to the Chaplains and stated how valuable the service was.

8. The Prison Service Review has resulted in major tensions throughout the service. The Prison Chaplains have continued to provide a vital service during this difficult time. There have been significant developments in this ministry, a ministry that impacts upon the lives of both prisoners and their families.

9. A further Review of Prison Chaplains will be carried out later this year; this will give an opportunity to influence the service that is being provided

and consider future developments. This must include the whole area of Community Chaplaincy.

FORCES PANEL

The Rev Dr Victor Dobbin reports:

1. On the 19 October, 2010 the British Government published the 'Strategic and Security Review' giving details on how the Armed Forces will be reshaped to tackle emerging and future threats. The review will lead to reductions in manpower over the next five years across all three Services including civilians who work in Defence.

2. Notwithstanding these inevitable reductions in manpower the Armed Forces will continue to require Chaplains to minister to the men and women as they carry out their duties in the most difficult and dangerous circumstances. Vacancies arise from time to time within all three services and anyone who would like to find out more about Chaplaincy work should contact the Convener or any member of Committee.

3. The Committee is conscious that a considerable number of men and women who belong to, or whose families are members of, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland serve in HM Forces and appreciate the work of the respective Chaplaincy Services who minister to them during their time on active service.

4. One of our Chaplains, the Rev Stephan van Os, is presently serving in Afghanistan with the 1st Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment. This has been a most difficult operation for the Battalion and no less demanding for the Chaplain. In his newsletter he writes, "*In spite of the fact that we are located in the middle of a war zone where all kinds of terrible and tragic events take place, when we go home it will be the memories of comradeship, shared hardship and the occasions when something funny happened that left us nearly crying with laughter that we will carry through the rest of our lives.*" He continues, "*Pray for my continuing ministry that I may find the right words to share in sermons, daily personal encounters and in my daily thought for the day at the Battlegroup Conference. Also that my words will be able to engage un-churched soldiers with the good news in categories they can grasp.*"

5. In the course of their operational tour the Battalion has had three soldiers killed and a number injured.

6. The Rev Heather Rendell is now serving in Afghanistan with her Regiment. The Church's prayers are with the Chaplains and the young men and women to whom they minister.

7. In addition to these two Chaplains who will have served in Afghanistan at some time during these past twelve months, seven other Chaplains from PCI hold Commissions in the Royal Army Chaplains Department. They include the Rev Norman McDowell, the Rev Dr Paul Swinn and the Rev Mark Henderson who serve with Regular Units. The Rev Professor Patton Taylor, the Rev Dr David Latimer and the Rev Colin Jones serve as Territorial Army Chaplains and the Rev Kenneth Crowe serves as an Army Cadet Force Chaplain. The Rev Derek Weir remains our only Officiating Chaplain at Aldergrove.

8. Two PCI Ministers serve as Chaplains in the Royal Air Force – the Rev David Edgar and the Rev Jonny Wylie. The Rev David Edgar is currently the Senior Chaplain at Royal Air Force Brize Norton, which is the largest RAF station in the United Kingdom.

9. The Committee appreciates the work of all the Chaplains and thanks them for their valuable and vital ministry.

The Committee congratulates the Rev Derek Weir on being awarded the MBE for his work as Officiating Chaplain at RAF Aldergrove.

10. The Committee congratulates the Rev Professor Patton Taylor MBE for completing 33 years unbroken and outstanding service as a Territorial Army Chaplain.

11. Each year the Church is asked to support the work of the Royal British Legion, The Royal Air Force ‘Wings Appeal,’ and the Royal Irish/UDR Benevolent Fund and the Panel encourages Congregations to remember all charities who provide vital support to those service personnel who are in need of help.

STUDENT SERVICES PANEL (incorporating The Presbyterian War Memorial Hostel)

The Rev Dr Robert Buick reports:

1. The Student Services Panel seeks to promote the cause of Christ in institutions of third level education throughout Ireland through the provision of University Chaplains and chaplaincy facilities. The reports by the individual University Chaplains are noted by the Panel and will be made available on the PCI website: www.presbyterianireland.org

2. At Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT) the **Rev William McCully** resigned from the post of part-time Chaplain and is thanked for his ministry to staff and students. The **Rev Dr Brian Brown** was appointed as his replacement.

3. The Panel also welcomed as new Chaplain in Residence to the post at Queen’s University Belfast, the **Rev Karen Mbayo**, who has been settling in as part of the existing Chaplaincy Services Team at the Presbyterian Chaplaincy Centre in Elmwood Avenue and in the Presbyterian Halls of Residence at Derryvolgie Avenue. This “one Chaplaincy in two locations” is unique in the Board’s Chaplaincy services, incorporating the **Christian Community** aspect at Derryvolgie, providing a strong, vibrant centre for Christian life and service based around the 80+ rooms which are available for students’ residence through term times; and outreach to the University community through **Rumours Café**, a fundamental part of the work of the Chaplaincy Centre, providing a space for meeting and greeting students and staff throughout the day. During the year an in depth review of the provision of Chaplaincy services has been undertaken.

4. At the University of Ulster which is based at four distinct campuses, Chaplaincy services continue to be provided by the **Rev Cheryl Meban** (Jordanstown and Belfast), the **Rev John Coulter** (Coleraine) and the **Rev Dr Robert Buick** (Magee).

5. PCI currently has no full-time Presbyterian Chaplain serving at Universities or Colleges in the Dublin area. A re-examination of the current joint Chaplaincy services arrangement with the Methodist Church in Ireland for Trinity College Dublin and at University College Dublin (both currently being provided by Methodist Church personnel) is being undertaken.

6. The many other Ministers of our Church who serve as “unofficial” Chaplains in Universities and Colleges throughout this island also deserve thanks and prayers, as they seek to minister in the name of Christ to both staff and students.

KINGHAN CHURCH

The Rev John Braithwaite reports:

1. At Assembly time last year there was a great deal of uncertainty in the Kinghan Church due to the length of the vacancy, but a much happier situation prevails this year largely due to the appointment in December of the Rev Glen Jordan to lead the work and minister to the Congregation. A special service was held in the Kinghan Church on 12 December, 2010 to mark the beginning of his ministry, at which the Minister Emeritus, the Rev Dr George Grindle gave a very fitting challenge to the Minister and Congregation. Because Mr Jordan is transferring from the Congregational Church, he has been appointed as Assistant to the Convener in the meantime, until he fulfils all the requirements of the Presbyterian Church. His first priority is to become proficient in sign language as quickly as possible, and he is working hard at this. Over these first months of ministry he continues to be greatly assisted by the Rev Dr Will Murphy who conducts two services per month which are much appreciated by the Congregation.

2. There has been loss as well as gain this year. At the end of February Mrs Anne Rodgers, the Lay Assistant, retired having kindly agreed to stay on an extra two months to provide a handover period to Mr Jordan. During this time Mrs Rodgers was able to introduce the new Minister to many aspects of running the Church, and to provide interpretation for him as they visited members of the Church. The Board is indebted to Mrs Rodgers for taking on many responsibilities beyond what she was originally employed to do. During the vacancy she became pastor, administrator, event organiser, as well as preaching and conducting worship twice per month. All this she did with a willing heart because she loves the Lord, and wanted to serve Him in the deaf community. A farewell service and lunch was held for her on 27 February in the Kinghan Church. The good wishes and prayers of the Church go with Anne into her well-earned retirement.

3. The Rev Glen Jordan, as well as continuing the ongoing activities of the Church with the support of the very active Church Committee, has introduced some new features to its worship. He has re-established contact with the school at Jordantown, and with some other groups in the deaf community. He has begun to do a limited amount of deputation to groups in the wider Church. He is ably supported by his wife Carol, and his two sons who attend the Church.

4. The Kinghan Congregation looks forward to the future with much greater confidence than it did this time last year. Thanks are due to Lindsay Conway and the Rev Bobby Liddle for their active support of the work during the year.

DONALD PATTON, Convener

OLDER PEOPLE SERVICES COMMITTEE

Strategic Objective 3

“Older People Services will deliver a high standard of social and nursing care to all our residents and to campaign on behalf of older people.”

Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:32, NIV)

1. Reverence for God is to be seen in how people treat fellow human beings, made in His image and not least weaker or more vulnerable members of society. For over sixty years PCI has taken a particular practical interest in the care of the elderly through what began with the opening of Adelaide House, continued as the Presbyterian Residential Trust, and is now the Older People’s Services of the Board of Social Witness.

2. The Board’s Residential and Nursing Homes comprise Adelaide House and Corkey House in Belfast, Ard Cluan in Londonderry, Harold McCauley House in Omagh, River House in Newcastle, Sunnyside House in Bangor, and York House in Portrush. These provide 230 registered beds. In addition there is sheltered housing at St Andrew Bungalows, Newtownabbey, and at Tritonville Close, Dublin.

3. It is clear that high levels of occupancy are necessary to cover the costs of running the Board’s homes and it is good to report that such levels have generally been maintained. In these times of recession and straitened government budgets delays in access to residential care can lead to higher levels of dependence and so to issues of assessment for admission and greater dependency levels. Levels of bed occupancy for respite care have also diminished. However, staffing levels have remained high and vacant posts have generally been easy to fill.

4. The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) is the independent health and social care body that monitors residential and nursing homes in Northern Ireland. It is an integral part of the health and social care structures, and it encourages continuous improvement in the quality of these services through a programme of inspections and reviews. It is good to report that PCI homes have received consistently positive reports after RQIA’s announced and unannounced inspections. These reports can be viewed on the RQIA’s web site, www.rqia.co.uk

5. Regular unannounced visits are also carried out by members of the Board’s own central management team, in conjunction with members of the Local Support Committees. It is gratifying to see further evidence of high standards and also to read of the appreciation for staff that is often expressed by residents.

6. It is also encouraging to hear other unsolicited testimony from residents and visiting friends and family to the distinctive “good atmosphere” and sense of welcome and care in the homes. Given that the average length of stay of the residents is several years our facilities are indeed “home” for them. The Committee is thankful to God for the Christian ethos that is so often evident. The management, staff and volunteers are much to be commended in this regard. At the meetings of the OPS Committee, members are also kept up to date with oral reports from representatives of the homes.

7. Recognition has come from other sources also. In 2010 Harold McCauley House won the Northern Ireland Amenity Council’s Best Kept Health and Social Care Facility in the Western Health and Social Care Trust. River House came runner up in the South Eastern division for the same award and Harold McCauley subsequently won the Best of the Best award. Both Adelaide House and Ard Cluan House received commendations.

8. In January 2011 a special service at Harold McCauley House marked the retirement of the Rev John Murdoch who had been chairman of the Local Support Committee for 20 years and who was a most assiduous and devoted visitor and Chaplain to the home. It was the opinion of those present that this had been a fitting and heartfelt tribute to his valuable service.

9. Older People’s Services continues to discuss the relocation or refurbishment of some of our existing facilities, most notably Ard Cluan and York House, where older buildings though familiar and homely do not always allow the fullest provision of all the desired facilities. It is also pursuing the development of intergenerational work.

10. The Committee wishes to record its gratitude to Mrs Linda Wray, the Residential Services Manager, to her Assistant, Mrs May Gordon, and to all the staff in Church House who continue to carry out their demanding and often exacting work with cheerfulness and efficiency.

JOHN SEAWRIGHT, Convener

FAMILY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Strategic Objective 4

“Family Services will promote family life and the general well-being of our members, continue to develop services for the disabled within the Church, support the work of the Taking Care Office, PCI Counselling, PCI Family Holiday and South Belfast Friendship House”

1. The Family Services Committee continues to seek to meet this objective through the dedication, commitment and hard work of many staff, both voluntary and professional, witnessing their faith in social action. As economic cuts and financial realities continue to put strain on already limited resources, tribute must be paid to those who give their time and talents so readily to assist some of the most vulnerable in our society –children and young people, those with a disability, the marginalised, the despairing and lost – family services seek to offer Christian compassion and practical assistance.

2. A new initiative of a pilot scheme, in partnership with the South Eastern Trust, has been delivered to two Presbyteries – Ards and Dromore. The ‘Getting on Board’ project involves promotion of the benefits of volunteering and offers encouragement and resources on how to get involved. It is hoped that this scheme will be expanded to cover the whole of PCI. The ‘big society’, of which much is heard, is a concept familiar to the Presbyterian Church. The work could not continue without the support and help of volunteers and as provision of services continues, often with reduced financial support and increasing demands on reserves, this scheme is to be commended.

3. Thanks are paid to those members of Local Support Groups, the ‘Friends of’ groups, Church House office staff and the many volunteers who ensure that support is offered, encouragement given and love and care experienced in a practical manner, showing God’s love for his creation.

Disability, Health and Wellbeing Committee

4. The following Terms of Reference have been agreed for this new Committee, a Committee that will embrace and build on the outstanding work carried out by the Learning Disability Committee. New sub-committees will address many of the issues related to physical and sensory disabilities, mental health including many of the issues related to suicide. This Committee will need considerable support, both in its membership and the topics that it addresses.

Aim:

- (i) To address, discuss and report on all issues relating to Disability, Health and Wellbeing, including all Mental Health Matters and Carers Issues.
- (ii) To continue the work of the Learning Disability Committee.

Membership:

- (iii) The Committee will draw membership from Ministers, Elders, and those who have an expertise or interest in the work of this Committee.
- (iv) Membership should be for no more than five years, with an option to be reappointed for a further five years.
- (v) Approval for changes in membership should be sought from the Family Services Committee.

Responsibilities:

- (vi) To advise, support and report on the work in this sector.
- (vii) To establish such Panels as may be required.
- (viii) To respond to all Consultations related to this topic.
- (ix) To comment on developments and cuts within this sector.
- (x) To heighten the awareness of the Presbyterian Community on issues related to Disability, Health and Wellbeing.
- (xi) To co-ordinate Specialist Training on behalf of the denomination.
- (xii) To host Conferences and Seminars as required.
- (xiii) To afford Carers an opportunity to discuss issues.
- (xiv) To support Carers by providing programmes of respite care.

- (xv) To recognise the role of Carers.
- (xvi) To give guidance on the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).
- (xvii) To keep Disability, Mental Health, Health Care and General Wellbeing and the needs of Carers on the Board's Agenda and that of the General Assembly.

LEARNING DISABILITY

The Rev Jim Waring reports:

1. The Committee appreciates the commitment of staff in Aaron House and Willow Brook to ensure Regulatory Body standards are met along with providing a high level of care to residents/tenants.
2. The knowledge and skills of the Managers, Anne Campbell (Willow Brook) and Denise Keegan (Aaron House), are exemplary and the projects as well as the wider organisation benefit greatly from them.
3. It was encouraging that a number of PCI staff delivered seminars at the Inter-Faith group on Learning Disability conference in April and shows their level of expertise and experience.
4. Residents benefited from holidays in Bangor, Co Down and Blackpool, England (Willow Brook); and the Share Centre, Lisnaskea and Giant's Causeway, Antrim Coast (Aaron House).
5. The work of Local Support Committees and "Friends of" Groups continues to enhance the service that is provided particularly in the provision of social and spiritual dimensions. The Committee wishes to thank everyone who participates in these roles.
6. The Committee is aware of the lack of resources/facilities for post-19 year olds with a learning disability.
7. The Committee on Learning Disability is keen to pursue looking at the provision of an employment scheme for people with a learning disability, particularly in the Northern Trust area and are in discussions with a local Congregation.
8. The Committee is keen to educate the wider Church on the need to integrate people with disabilities into all aspects of Congregational life and is open to meet with representatives from Congregations to advise on integration and special needs.
9. The Committee continues to be concerned at the lack of funding available for the development of additional supported Housing Schemes.

PCI COUNSELLING

Mrs Stephanie Windrum reports:

1. PCI Counselling has remained an important provider of hope and support for numerous couples and individuals during 2010. Many of the long-serving, dedicated Counsellors have been working to full capacity, providing space and counsel to people in their time of need. As volunteers, Counsellors graciously give of themselves week in, week out. To get a glimpse of their work

by reading evaluations from clients is often humbling. Recently one client commented, *"It has been one of the most helpful, enlightening and empowering experiences of my life. In every way I was facilitated, helped and listened to. Thank you so much."*

2. Referrals continue to come from a variety of sources. Most come from Church based contacts such as Ministers, Deaconesses, or Family Workers. Many clients hear about the service through word of mouth, namely other or past users, which is always an encouragement for the team. This year also started the process of updating publicity material and internet accessibility. This will hopefully promote an increase in self referrals in the coming years.

3. 2010 has also witnessed some exciting changes for PCI Counselling; 5 new recruits have been welcomed, bringing the team to 18 Counsellors in total. The wider geographical spread means that more people can access the service closer to home.

4. Ongoing Training and Supervision has remained an important aspect of maintaining high professional standards throughout the year. Sincere thanks must be extended to both Supervisors, for their unfailing support and encouragement to each Counsellor and the Co-ordinator on a regular basis.

5. Serving members of PCI Counselling Advisory Group have all survived the first year of office intact! Each member has contributed significantly to the professional oversight of the service by providing regular advice, support and encouragement. Their enthusiasm for the development of the service is contagious and has helped to promote a renewed vision for this important part of the work of PCI.

6. The Re-marriage Panel has continued to provide Ministers with valuable guidance on issues of divorce, re-marriage and blended families. Serving panellists willingly contribute their expertise as an act of service each month. A final big word of thanks is extended to each of them.

7. In conclusion, already it is looking like 2011 may be a difficult year for families, couples and individuals. Pressures of all kinds, including rising unemployment, increased cost of living, and numerous cuts to all political budgets can place people under much stress. Please pray during these difficult times that PCI Counselling can provide wisdom, guidance and the love of Christ to those who suffer.

PCI FAMILY HOLIDAY

The Rev Stuart Finlay reports:

1. The PCI Family Holiday takes place each year from Easter Monday through to Friday at the Share Centre, Lisnaskea.

2. Last year 185 people were accommodated in the Guest House, chalets and caravans. Among the families are those sponsored by the Presbyterian Orphan and Children's Society. Like everyone they enjoy the relaxed family atmosphere.

3. The Share Centre offers a wide variety of activities and their staff deal very professionally with all participants, both those who are able-bodied and those with special needs. Outdoor activities include canoeing, sailing,

windsurfing, banana skiing, climbing, archery, gorge walking and Laser Skirmishing. There are also indoor activities for the more artistic and creative – T-shirt printing, handcrafts and drama. The Centre’s indoor leisure pool and fitness suite are always a great attraction.

4. Families often enjoy the weekly shopping trip to Enniskillen and, weather permitting, a visit to the Marble Arch Caves. The PCI Youth Team also organises games and activities for the children most mornings and afternoons. What a contribution this team of enthusiastic and dedicated young Christians makes to a busy week!

5. Each morning begins with a short time of worship for all ages before the day’s activities begin. In the evening there is a time of worship for everyone before the young people go off for their own time of Bible teaching with the Youth Team, leaving the adults to have their time together. Every year there is a visiting speaker and this year it was a delight to have the Rev Peter Dickinson, Minister of Muckamore Congregation.

6. In the later part of the evening there is a “Fun time” for all ages, ranging from a Beetle Drive and Table Quiz to a Concert and Farewell Party. It’s all good, wholesome fun in which mums and dads with their children can mix together.

7. The time together is filled with fun ... and soon comes to an end! New friendships are made, old ones renewed, and everyone has the opportunity to reflect on the Bible’s message for their lives. The organisers are so grateful for many answered prayers and for a real sense of the Lord’s protection and presence through the week.

TAKING CARE COMMITTEE

Mr Ronnie Orr reports:

Leading little ones and young people to God – in safety

1. The core of work that goes on year on year is aimed at nurturing children into faith in Christ and providing opportunities to develop skills and have fun together. This is achieved by the tremendous commitment and enthusiasm of leaders who take on the task in the context of also keeping the children safe. This includes not only their physical safety but safeguarding them from anyone who might harm them or exploit them.

Work of the Co-ordinator and the Taking Care Office

2. The Taking Care Office continues to inform Ministers, Designated Persons and others about the work primarily through our newsletter, the “Taking Care Update”, as well as the Taking Care website which is regularly updated. Deborah Webster, assisted by Amanda Cotter, has continued to provide a sterling service of advice and information. Also during the year, Taking Care benefited from Geoff Marshall, one of the Panel of Trainers, standing in for Deborah while she was on maternity leave. Geoff kept the work moving forward and took his training skills far and wide across the country.

3. Thanks are due to all the Volunteer Trainers, Committee members, Designated Persons, to Deborah Webster, Co-ordinator, Amanda Cotter,

Administrator and also to the Rev Bobby Liddle and Lindsay Conway who faithfully give of themselves to the work of Taking Care throughout our denomination and for the Glory of God. The Committee is grateful to the Presbyterian Orphan and Children's Society for subsidising some of our literature. Many Congregations deserve recognition for devoting all or part of a Sunday Service annually to "Taking Care" and refreshing their commitment to safeguarding children.

4. **Reporting Concerns** – This year there has been a significant rise in the number of incidents. Whenever a child protection allegation or complaint is made it must be promptly communicated to Church House, where Lindsay Conway is the Designated Person. Therefore, at the same time as a Congregation is dealing with an incident, disclosure or allegation and linking with the child protection agencies locally, there is an expectation of contact with Church House so that further advice is available and any wider and public implications can be managed.

5. **Training** – Taking Care Training sessions took place during 2010 at congregational level from Toberdoney to Maynooth and everywhere in between. These sessions were facilitated mostly by our 25 volunteer trainers and the Church is indebted to them for their work and commitment. Several Designated Persons training events were also organized and attended by many.

6. **Conference 2011** – The working theme for the 2011 Conference on 8 October will be "Our Digital World", in the recognition that children and young people in particular find technology and not least "Social Networking" enabling and exciting. However, it can also have some negative influences and dangers. Leaders need to be aware of the distinction between safe practice and what constitutes risk. The Rev Steve Stockman will be the keynote speaker this year as well as various guests. There will be opportunity for delegates to attend two practical workshops on a variety of subjects. These will include Health and Safety, self harm and suicide and the avoidance of unsafe and addictive behaviour. There will also be updates on vetting and barring both North and South of the Border. This event is a great opportunity to learn from the experience of others and to be encouraged in looking out for the best interests of children. Please make sure that members of Kirk Session, leaders of organisations and Designated Persons receive the notification and the details of how to book their place at the Conference.

7. **Taking Care Committee – Business Plan** – The main focus of the work this year has been the review of the Taking Care Manual (launched in 2005) and the Taking Care Audit. The results will be useful for the wider work of PCI in giving a quantitative grasp of the extent of service provided to children and the numbers of people who are volunteering. There is always room for more people to discern their gifts and offer themselves for selection as leaders. However, the Church can be thankful and celebrate that it has always been an active part of what has been recently coined the "Big Society". The Revised Manual will be launched at the Taking Care Conference 2011 and the Audit will be reported on at the Assembly. The Republic of Ireland Advisory Group continues to meet to consider aspects of the work specific to law, culture and policy in the Republic of Ireland.

8. **Vetting and Barring Requirements** – Congregations are advised that there have been no changes made to the current system of Vetting and Barring and so checking continues as normal, although a new form was introduced in 2010. Police checks have continued to be processed by the Taking Care Administrator, Amanda Cotter. The Board acts as an umbrella body for outside organisations. On average, 50 forms are sent to Access NI to be checked every week as well as 2 Garda Vetting forms on average each week, which are sent to the National Youth Council, Ireland.

9. **Mission Plans** – The ongoing work of Taking Care by Presbyteries, Kirk Sessions, Ministers, Designated Persons, Trainers, Children’s and Youth Workers and Leaders is an integral factor to our mission as a Church. It is evidenced by a steady, patient caring approach to children and those who look after them, while at the same time being alert to risks and also prudent and prompt action when a concern is identified. While many families are mainstream members of Congregations, Taking Care also serves many children whose families have little other contact with the Church Family. Reaching out to them and promoting the Christian faith is an opportunity to assure them of good standards and exemplary behaviour in all the Church offers. It is important that everyone in leadership is encouraged to become familiar with the revised guidance manual, continues, when necessary, to access the good advice from the Taking Care office and takes up both initial and refresher training.

ANNE TOLLAND, Convener

ADULT SERVICES COMMITTEE

Strategic Objective 5

“Adult Services shall manage the work of Thompson House, Carlisle House and Gray’s Court and promote an addiction free society through our Addiction Services Committee.”

1. The past year has been a particularly difficult year for the projects serviced by the Adult Services Committee caused by no financial uplifts and the threat of reduction in beds being funded. Throughout this period, senior staff both in our Board Office and in the projects have worked diligently with Health and Social Care Trusts, PSNI/PBNI to try to resolve issues, whilst at the same time ensuring the high quality service provided has continued without impacting on residents.

2. Many will not have experienced the impact of having someone either known to them, or a family member, who has needed to avail of the services provided in Thompson House, Carlisle House or Gray’s Court. However, for those who have come into contact with these services, their stories speak for themselves.

Thompson House

3. All residents are referred via the PBNI and many will come with specific conditions to reside, i.e. no alcohol or drugs to be taken.

4. Over the past year, Thompson House has accommodated 52 residents. Over recent years, the Committee has noticed a significant increase in the number of residents who have alcohol/drug addictions (85%), and/or have mental health issues. To meet their needs, staff have received training in knowing how to deal with these issues and subsequent behaviours.

5. Many of the men have not come from families who take much interest in them, but there are those who come from a Christian home and it is gratifying for staff to hear from residents' families of how they appreciate the Christian ethos of Thompson House and the Bible Study group held by one of our Project Workers, Keith McIlroy, and the questions posed by residents about the Christian way of living.

6. Staff work with other Criminal Justice Agencies to meet the needs of residents through rehabilitation programmes. The Committee is excited at the redevelopment programme currently being undertaken at Thompson House. This has involved close working with Helm Housing Association and NIHE Supporting People Initiative, along with discussions with local residents groups and the media.

Carlisle House

7. The Committee continues to look at ways of reducing the waiting times for admission, including commencing a pre-admission treatment group. Carlisle House prides itself on being creative and innovative in the programmes provided and in encouraging our Service Users to be proactive.

8. Recently an Art Exhibition was held in the Hopelink Centre and a DVD launched at Queen's Film Theatre on 7 October, 2010, which were a great success.

9. The dry stone walling project is now well integrated into the programme at Carlisle House. Service Users who have left Carlisle House are also requesting to be able to continue to go dry stone walling. Comments have included: *"It has given me purpose; I feel I have achieved something; it is the one day that I get peace from anxiety and worry; it gives me pride."*

Gray's Court

10. Gray's Court has gone through a difficult period of clients using alcohol or drugs. This has been very difficult for our Project Worker, Frances Craig and the other residents. This has now been resolved and a more stable, motivated group has been established.

COLIN MEGAW, Convener

SOCIAL ISSUES AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Rev Bobby Liddle reports:

1. The Committee has continued only slowly with the revision of the booklet on 'Getting Married', pending the outcome of other discussion in the General Assembly relating to marriage.

2. A series of leaflets on praying scripture are under production. These are for the pastoral use of Ministers, Elders, Deaconesses, Chaplains etc. These

cover a number of issues including Depression, Fear, Purity, Worry, Guilt and Bereavement. Others may be produced in the future to add to this list.

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.
2. That the General Assembly continue to call on government to increase the budget of the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety and ask the Minister to review decisions on the distribution of funding.
3. That the General Assembly thank those Congregations who participated in the recent Taking Care Audit, assisting greatly in the future planning of Taking Care Training and Resources.
4. That the General Assembly agree that a Taking Care Audit be carried out in Congregations every three years.
5. That the Board of Social Witness, with its associated working Committees for the ensuing year, be appointed with Par 281 of the Code as follows:

FOR INFORMATION

OLD AGE FUND, WOMEN'S FUND AND INDIGENT LADIES' FUND

The Rev WPH Erskine reports:

1. The Directors report that during the last financial year, which ended 31 December, 2010, 105 beneficiaries (41 in the Old Age Fund, 46 in the Women's Fund and 18 in the Indigent Ladies' Fund) received grants.

2. The changes in beneficiaries during the year are as follows:

Beneficiaries Receiving Quarterly Grant	Old Age Fund	Presbyterian Women's	Indigent Ladies Fund	TOTAL Fund
At 1 January 2010	31	38	16	85
New Grants Provided	8	4	2	14
Deaths	(1)	(4)	(2)	(7)
Grants no longer required	-	(6)	(1)	(7)
As at 31 December 2010	38	32	15	85
Beneficiaries receiving one-off donations	2	4	-	6
Deaths and Grants no longer required (as above)	1	10	3	14
No of Beneficiaries receiving assistance during the year	41	46	18	105

3. The total distribution of the Funds in Grants, Donations and Gifts was £125,508 (£55,193 from the Old Age Fund, £50,540 from the Women's Fund and £19,775 from the Indigent Ladies' Fund).

4. An annual grant of £1,100, paid quarterly, was sent to beneficiaries during the year (2009: £1,000).

5. A 'Special Gift' of £275 (2009: £250) was sent to every beneficiary prior to Christmas.

6. During the year the Directors responded sympathetically to various problems which had been brought to their attention. They gave one-off donations, as needed, to assist in particular cases where immediate financial aid was more appropriate than annual grants. Ministers are asked to bear in mind the possibility of help from these funds in similar cases connected with their own Congregations.

7. The Directors assure the Church that all monies that come to the Funds are carefully and wisely spent.

8. The Directors of the Funds deeply appreciate the kindness and thoughtfulness of those who have remembered the work of the Funds either by gift or bequest, and hope that their example may encourage others to support this vital aspect of the Church's outreach.

9. The Directors of the Funds wish to thank the Staff for the sensitive and sympathetic way in which they carried out the efficient administration of the Funds during the year.