

## ARKLOW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### VACANCY PROFILE

The following profile is intended as a brief introduction to the congregation of Arklow Presbyterian Church. We are delighted to be able to offer you this initial snapshot of our congregation and community, and we welcome your interest. Our latest Mission Plan is also attached.

As we seek to discern God's guidance for us in the coming weeks, we are praying also for you as you engage in your own process of discernment, and we hope we will be an encouragement to one another.

### **ARKLOW**

The town of Arklow is in County Wicklow, about 45 miles from Dublin city centre. The road is a very good national route (almost all dual carriageway and motorway) and the most recent upgrade has been completed. Arklow has a population of about 13,000.

Like many Irish towns, Arklow has benefited in recent years from inward migration, and there is now a significant international population in the town. Eastern European and African countries are particularly well represented.

The severity of the recent economic recession has affected employment prospects in Arklow, as they have elsewhere and some businesses have had to close. However, the good road and other transport links have made Arklow a viable base for those who work further afield, and especially in the greater Dublin area. Many have been drawn to Arklow by its sense of community, its proximity both to the coast and to the Wicklow Mountains, and by its much more affordable property prices. Rental accommodation in the town is in high demand.

The train service to Dublin is largely geared to traditional commuters, so the schedule is currently somewhat limited. However, the DART (Dublin Area Rapid Transit) can be boarded at Greystones for Dublin City Centre. There is also a good bus service to Dublin.

### **ARKLOW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH: THE LOCATION**

The church building is located on the north side of the town, on the old Dublin Road. From the M11 you take the Arklow North exit, and the church is just a couple of minutes along the road, on the right, before you reach the river.

A 700,000 euro redevelopment project for the church and halls was completed in 2011, and all loans have been paid off. The redesigned church and community building now provide facilities which are light-filled, spacious, and the envy of almost all who have seen them. The building provides well-designed spaces for general hospitality, for small groups of various kinds, and for the use of the wider community.

The building is now rented or otherwise used more or less to capacity, by both church and community groups and the design of the building encourages easy and comfortable

interaction. The new worship space is larger, more flexible and equipped with audio-visual equipment. There is a study/office provided for the minister.

The four bedroom manse is just a few minutes' drive from the church (1.5miles), in a small cul-de-sac, in a quiet scenic area. It is just over 10 years old and is in excellent condition.

## **ARKLOW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH: THE PEOPLE**

At present there are 48 families/homes associated with the congregation, and just over 60% of those live within 5 miles of the church building. The average attendance at worship was 54 people in 2017. This represents roughly half of the total number of those claiming association with the congregation.

The age profile 1 year ---- 90 years

Over the past years there has been growth in the number of people making a regular financial contribution to the church, and the leadership has been proactive in addressing the importance of making one's financial contribution in a recordable way.

Current congregational events and organisations include two Bible Study groups, a Sunday School, a morning Coffee Dock, a morning prayer meeting, a Bible club for children, a youth group and an annual community BBQ. There are also some all age fun get-togethers throughout the year. The congregation are also involved with several joint and/or ecumenical services each year, including the Easter Sunrise Service held on the beach.

## **THE COMMUNITY**

Arklow Presbyterian Church was until 2007 linked to Greystones Presbyterian Church (28 miles from Arklow), and although this linkage came to an end, the two congregations have maintained a warm and continuing friendship. There is a willingness on both sides to consider joint projects which might be deemed wise and appropriate to both congregations. After Greystones, the next closest Presbyterian neighbour in Enniscorthy Presbyterian Church (29 miles from Arklow).

The congregation enjoys warm and cooperative relationships with the other churches in the Arklow area (Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland, Methodist and Bridge Community Church). Several churches gave gifts to the redevelopment programme and the pulpit was a gift from the local Catholic parish.

The Council for Mission in Ireland supports a Mission Worker based in Arklow, Philip Whelton who is also an elder and member of the session. His main work currently centres on running children's and Bible clubs and a youth club, as well as a summer programme. About 350 children and young people in total pass through these programmes each year, almost none of whom have any other association with Arklow Presbyterian Church. Philip maintains considerable pastoral contact with many of the families whose children take part in the clubs and other events.

Ovoca Manor, Scripture Union's retreat and Adventure Centre is located nearby in the Vale of Avoca.

## **A NEW MINISTER**

As we begin to seek a new minister, we welcome the interest of anyone who is sensing the prompting of the Spirit of God to explore this possibility with us. We have no limiting profile in mind and welcome interest from people of all ages and backgrounds.

In light of our hopes for future missional growth, we seek a minister who will engage warmly and graciously with the wider community, helping us to discern where opportunities may be found or created for the announcement of the good news of Jesus Christ, and for the gracious deepening of relationships with our neighbours, serving and learning from one another.

We seek a minister who will guide us in this new phase of our life as a congregation, in which the ministry we have to the community through our new premises can be further developed. At the same time, we are committed to re-engaging with our own growth in spiritual maturity as a congregation, and seek a minister who will guide us wisely and kindly in our journey, as we deepen our trust in God in the days ahead.

The session is made up of both men and women elders, and we expect our new minister to have regard for both, and to be willing to express support for the position of the General Assembly on the ordination of women to the ruling and teaching eldership.

## **FINALLY**

Thank you for your interest in Arklow Presbyterian Church. If you have further questions, the convener of the Vacancy Commission, the Rev. Gary McDowell will be happy to hear from you and to facilitate you in any way he can.

Our website is [www.arklowpresbyterianchurch.com](http://www.arklowpresbyterianchurch.com)