

Immanuel Congregation

The congregation of Immanuel was born out of the union of Agnes Street and Bethany which was effected on the 14th October 1971. The Rev. Donald Gillies, who had been the minister of Agnes Street, accepted a call to Clifton Street United and the Rev John Girvan, the minister of Bethany was called and installed as the first minister of the united congregation.

On receiving a call from the congregation of Hill Street, Lurgan, Mr Girvan relinquished the pastorate of the congregation on the 13th November 1972. He was installed as Moderator of the General Assembly in 1981.

Mr Girvan was succeeded by the Rev. James Neilly, the minister of Sloan Street, Lisburn and he was installed on the 21st June 1973. After 22 years faithful service Mr Neilly retired in September 1995. His son Stephen is minister of 3rd Portglenone and son Mark is minister of Buckna. A third son Paul, a Consultant in Altnagelvin Hospital, Londonderry, sadly died at the early age of 42. His loss was greatly mourned by the congregation.

Mr Neilly was succeeded by the Rev. Victor Patterson, who was installed on 28th June 1996. Despite the difficulties of the times and the problems of a redevelopment area, under Mr Patterson's leadership the congregation has maintained its work and witness in the area. All organizations are flourishing and the Boy's Brigade and Girl's Brigade Companies are among the strongest numerically in Belfast.

A former elder, Mr Ronnie McWatters, was awarded an MBE in 1985 and a present elder, Mr Tom Crymble, an MBE in 1988. These well merited awards for service in their own field were welcomed by the congregation.