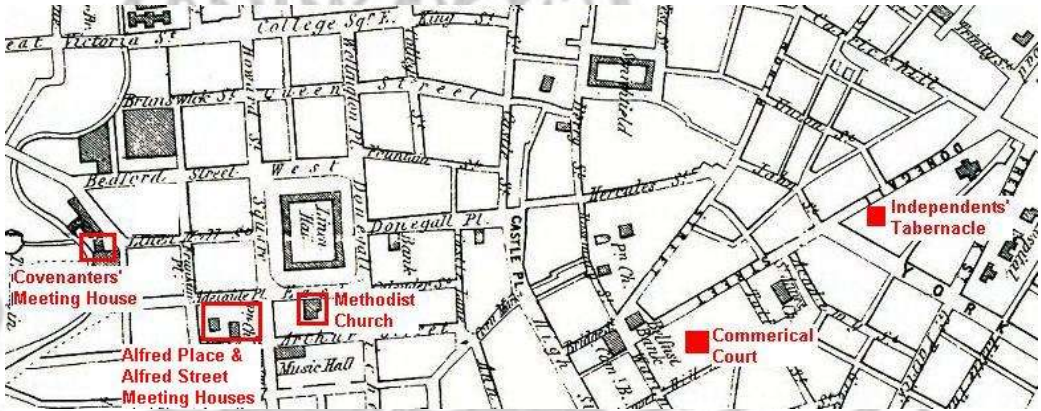





Fitzroy – A River of Faith for 200 Years






Fitzroy Presbyterian Church – Historical Highlights

1813	<p>A group of families with “burgher” sympathies start a Second Seceder Congregation (the seventh Presbyterian congregation to be established in Belfast), meeting in various loaned premises (see map below), including :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⌘ Reformed Presbyterian (Covenanter) Meeting House (located on the Old Dublin Road); ⌘ Methodist Church (right); ⌘ Independents’ Tabernacle; ⌘ Commercial Court (off Donegall Street). 
1818	<p>The “Burgher” and “Anti-Burgher” elements of the Secession Synod amalgamate, but the fledgling 2nd Seceder congregation decide not to re-unite with the First Seceder Congregation in Berry Street.</p>
14 th Nov. 1820	<p>In a ceremony in the Independent’s Meeting House on Donegall Street, the Rev. John Edgar (the son of the minister of the Secession Synod Church in Ballynahinch) is ordained as Minister of the Second Seceder Congregation in Belfast.</p>
Nov. 1821	<p>The congregation starts meeting in the recently built Alfred Place Meeting House.</p>
6 th Jan. 1822	<p>The Alfred Place Meeting House is formally opened, sermons being delivered by two of the leading preachers in the Secession Synod, the Rev. John Rogers of Glascar (noon) and the Rev. John Reid of Drumbanagher (evening).</p> 



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24 th Sep. 1826	Rev. John Edgar marries Susanna, daughter of Thomas Grimshaw, Esq. of Whitehouse, the wedding service being conducted by the Rev. Professor Cairns.
Nov. 1826	<p>One month after his father's death on 17th October 1826, the Rev. John Edgar is elected as Secession Synod's Professor of Theology at the Belfast Academical Institution.</p> 
14 th Aug. 1829	John Edgar's first letter on the Temperance issue is printed by the Belfast News Letter and the Ulster Temperance Society was formed following a meeting in the Waring Street offices of the Belfast Religious Tract Society on 24 th September 1829. The News Letter edition for 6 th October carries an article about John Edgar's address to a temperance meeting in Donegall Square Methodist Church.
July 1836	Professor Edgar is awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by Hamilton College (USA) – the College's President, the Rev. Dr. Penney, informed Dr. Edgar that the college had only conferred this honour on six people in the previous 20 year. During an earlier visit to Ireland, Dr. Penney had influenced John Edgar temperance views.
8 th Jan. 1837	<p>The new imposing and, for the Secession Synod, rather grandiose Alfred Street Meeting House (<i>right top</i>, built with an adjacent manse at a cost of £2,150) is opened, the address being delivered by the Rev. Dr. Mitchell (Professor of Divinity at Glasgow) – admission was 1 shilling! The services had been advertised in both the Belfast News Letter and the Northern Whig newspapers, and the opening received coverage in both papers on 9th January 1837. The Alfred Street Meeting House (<i>right top</i>) bears a striking similarity to the near-by Synod of Ulster Meeting House on May Street (<i>right bottom</i>, opened in 1829).</p>  



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1837 →	After the move to Alfred Street, John Edgar installs a Town Missionary in the Alfred Place premises, a move which led to the formation of churches in Eglinton Street in 1852 (now Eglinton Presbyterian Church) and Argyle Place in 1864 (right, now West Kirk Presbyterian Church).	
18 th Aug. 1839	The new Ulster Female Penitentiary in Brunswick Street is officially opened, the sermon at the Inaugural ceremony being delivered by the Rev. James Morgan – penitents begin to be admitted from November 1839.	
10 th July 1840	The Secession Synod and the Synod of Ulster unite to form the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland – the Rev. John Rogers led the procession by the Secession Synod Assembly from the Meeting House in Linen Hall Street to the Rosemary Street Meeting House.	
1842 – 1843	Following on from the Rev. Dr. Cooke and the Rev. Dr. Hanna, the Rev. Dr. John Edgar becomes the third Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.	
1847	The General Assembly ruling that the holder of the Chair in Systematic Divinity should no longer hold a pastoral charge results in the resignation of the Rev. John Edgar from the charge of Alfred Street Meeting House.	
27 th June 1848	The Rev. George Shaw, a protégé of the Rev. Robert M ^c Cheyne of Dundee (whom Dr. Edgar greatly admired), is appointed as Alfred Street Presbyterian Church's second minister – the Rev. Shaw had held the charge at a church in Chester at the time of his Call to Alfred Street.	
5 th Dec.1853	A Presbyterian College for the training of candidates for the ministry is opened close to Queen's College, with Dr. Merle D'Aubigné, Professor of Reformation History at Geneva, delivered the Inaugural Address – the Rev. John Edgar and the Rev. Samuel Hanna were appointed as joint Professors of Divinity.	
Jan. 1860	The Rev. William Stevenson, Assistant Minister to the Rev. George Shaw, is installed as the first minister of Christ Church, Rathgar.	



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1860	During a visit to the United States, the Rev. John Edgar is awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Law by the University of New York City.
1861	<p>Upon returning from the United States, Dr. Edgar arranges the purchase of a Baptist Meeting House in Academy Street and begins an outreach campaign, through which two congregations are subsequently formed – the now defunct Clifton Street Church in 1862 and Ekenhead Memorial Church (right, now Rosemary Church) in 1865.</p> 
26 th Aug. 1866	<p>After a protracted illness, the Rev. Dr. John Edgar dies in Dublin and is interred in Balmoral Graveyard, the obsequies being led by the Moderator, the Rev. Dr. Wilson, the Rev. Moore of Elmwood Church and the Rev. Dr. Murphy of the Presbyterian College – a Memorial Obelisk is later erected.</p> 
	<p>A plot of land measuring 100 feet on Fitzroy Avenue by 161 feet on Caledonia Street (and 142 feet to the rear) is purchased from a prominent landowner, Mr Robert Corry, for the construction of a new Church.</p>
1872	<p>The construction of a new Church, halls and school (designed by Robert Young of Young & Mackenzie) by William McCammond commences – the 1871 Street Plan shows the area surrounding the proposed building. The Church was built mainly of Scrabo Sandstone, with Donegall Granite and Connemara Serpentine being used to decorate the main entrance. The final cost was £8,200 and, whilst the interior of the Church is laid out along traditional meeting house lines, the exterior represents an eclectic mix of Gothic Revival forms, especially in its use of a “flying arcade stairway” to connect the free-standing Tower to the main body of the Church.</p>  



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1872	The Alfred Street building is sold and the congregation meets in the near-by Clarence Place Hall whilst awaiting the construction of the new Church building.
12 th April 1874	<p>The official opening of the new Fitzroy Avenue Presbyterian Church, takes place with the address being delivered by the Rev. Henry Allon D.D. of Union Chapel in Islington, London. The services had been advertised in the Northern Whig (which included a brief report in its Monday edition), the Belfast News Letter and the Belfast Evening Telegraph.</p> 
1875	A new Manse at 32 Wellington Park, also designed by Young & Mackenzie, replaces the Alfred Street Manse.
1878	A temporary wooden Mission Hall is erected in McClure Street to provide for the educational, social and spiritual needs of people in the Lower Ormeau district.
1881 – 1882	<p>The Rev. Dr. William Stevenson DD of Rathgar, formerly Assistant Minister to Rev. Shaw, serves as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.</p> 
30 th Oct. 1883	<p>The Rev. George Shaw ordains his seventh child, the Rev. Wilfred Weaver Shaw, in Fisherwick Place Church. The Rev. W.W. Shaw and his wife serve as Missionaries in Manchuria, arriving there on 21st June 1884.</p> 
1885	A permanent Mission Hall is erected in McClure Street and continued under the management of Fitzroy Avenue church until 1939, when control was transferred to the Belfast City Mission. Members of Fitzroy Avenue continued to play a key role in the work of the Mission Hall.
1890	<p>The 9th Belfast Boys' Brigade Company is started in McClure Street Mission Hall and transfers to Fitzroy Avenue Church in 1894. The first Captain is Mr. R. H. Steen and the company's centenary is commemorated by a stained glass window in the Church.</p> 



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13 th April 1892	After over 40 years of active ministry, the Rev. Shaw retires due to ill health, although he continued to take an interest in the affairs of the congregation until his death on 25th October 1899 – a grateful congregation later installed a memorial window in the south transept.
28 th Feb. 1893	The Rev. William Colquhoun, formerly of First Omagh and First Ahoghill, is installed as the church's third minister.
1893 – 1894 1894 – 1895	The Rev. Professor William Todd Martin D. Lit., a former member of the congregation and Professor of Christian Ethics and Apologetics at the Presbyterian College, serves two consecutive terms as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
28 th Jan. 1901	The top twenty-one feet of the Church Tower collapse into Caledonia Street during a severe storm – the episode was reported in the Belfast News Letter and the Belfast Evening Telegraph, and Major J.H.A. Patton's account of witnessing the incident was recorded in the January 1967 edition of the <i>Fitzroy Courier</i> .
1903	The 9 th B.B. Old Boys' Association, the first of its kind in Ireland, is established.
21 st Jan. 1906	An organ is installed with Alfred Hollins, of Free St George's Church in Edinburgh, playing at its inaugural service – the organ was made by Norman & Beard Ltd. at a cost of £1,200.
25 th Oct. 1908	A hall for the Old Boys' Association is opened in Fitzroy Avenue by the Right Honourable Thomas Sinclair D.L. The Fitzroy Avenue Hall (the first of its kind in Ireland) was inspected by the founder of the Boys' Brigade, Sir William A. Smith of Glasgow in February 1909.





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1912 – 1913	A former member of Fitzroy Avenue Church, the Rev. Dr. Henry Montgomery, serves as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Montgomery, a protégé of the Rev. Shaw, had played a prominent role in the Church’s work in the McClure Street Mission Hall. He held the charge at Albert Street until 1902 and had established the Shankill Road Mission in 1896.	
1914 – 1918	83 members of the congregation serve overseas, with 16 being killed and 23 being badly wounded – Dr. James Alexander Sinton was “mentioned in despatches” on six occasions and was awarded the Victoria Cross and the Russian Order of St. George. During a battle on 21 st January 1916 at the Orah Ruins in Mesopotamia, Captain Sinton attended to wounded comrades under very heavy fire, and the citation to his VC reads: <i>“For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty. Although shot through both arms and through the side, he refused to go to hospital, and remained as long as daylight lasted, attending to his duties under very heavy fire. In three previous actions Captain Sinton displayed the utmost bravery.”</i>	 Captain J.A Sinton 
1919	Mr Herbert Ireland, an Elder in Fitzroy, becomes General Secretary of the Belfast YMCA.	
11 th May 1921	The Rev. Colquhoun tenders his resignation on medical advice – following his death on 1 st April 1934, Easter Sunday, a memorial tablet was unveiled on the 15 th December 1935.	
6 th Jan. 1922	Exactly one hundred years after the official opening of the Alfred Place Meeting House, the Rev. Dr. James B. Woodburn is installed as the church’s fourth minister. Dr. Woodburn, the son of the minister at Ballywillan, had previously held charges at First Holywood, Castlerock and Rostrevor.	



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13 th April 1924	A special service is held to commemorate Fitzroy Avenue's Golden Jubilee – the Rev. Dr. Mackintosh Mackay of Glasgow delivers the address.	
1937	Mr Herbert J. Mateer, a member of Fitzroy Avenue Presbyterian Church and a missionary with the European Missionary Fellowship, founds the Bangor Worldwide Missionary Convention.	
1939 – 1945	The members of the congregation play a full part in the war effort, both at home and overseas. The Church Halls are also used to house American servicemen, and Major J.H.A. Patton, an Elder in the Church, was awarded the Military Cross. The end of the war is celebrated in the Church with a Victory Mission led by the Rev. James Dunlop (Oldpark).	
1940	Congregation member Jimmy Lindsay is evacuated from the beaches of Dunkirk – ironically, the vessel which carried him to safety was called H.M.S Fitzroy !	
1940 – 1941	In its centenary year, Dr. James Woodburn serves as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.	
11 th May 1943	Following the retirement of the Dr. Woodburn due to poor health, the Rev. Robert E. Alexander, latterly of Trinity Church (Ahoghill), is installed as the church's fifth minister. The Rev. Alexander displayed a keen interest in the work of the Kinghan Mission for the Deaf and learned sign language so that he could communicate with deaf members of the congregation.	
1947	A new Manse at 50 Malone Park is purchased at a cost of £2,795 – in May 2008 the building (unfortunately, no longer owned by the Church) was on the property market with a price tag of £3,400,000!	
1948	The 24 th Belfast Girls' Brigade Company is formed in Fitzroy Avenue Presbyterian Church. The first Captain was Miss Florence Corry, ably assisted by Miss Doreen Waite and Miss Betty Stevenson. Upon the re-organisation of the GB in 1968, it became the 46 th Northern Ireland Company.	



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1950	Mr. W. Edward Dornan, an Elder in Fitzroy and General Secretary of the Belfast YMCA, produces a history of the organisation entitled 1850 - 1950 One Hundred Eventful Years; an Outline History of the city of Belfast YMCA
1953	A Christian Endeavour Society is established and, at the 1955 Annual Congregational Meeting, Mr Sloan Bell reported that 30 young people had been involved by the end of its first full year.
January 1955	The quarterly Fitzroy Courier newsletter is launched and is edited for many years by Miss Margaret Ritchie and then Mrs. Joy Bell (nee Alexander). The Fitzroy Courier was later renamed Fitzroy News and ended its life as Fitzroy Focus – the latter name being retained as the name for the segment of Sunday Morning services in which announcements are made.
1955 May October	General Assembly's "Year of Mission" Five Prayer Groups meet in different homes for " <i>Bible Study, Prayer and Christian Fellowship</i> ", to quote Mrs W. E. Dornan's report in the July 1955 edition of the Fitzroy Courier . These Prayer Groups were the fore-runners of today's Home Fellowship Groups. The Rev. Glanville Rees of Llandudno conducts a series of evangelistic events.
1955 - 1956	The Rev. James Carlile Breakey, an Assistant Minister during the ministry of Rev. Colquhoun, serves as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
7 th Dec. 1956	The Rev. Alexander starts an organisation for young married couples called The Mariners – fifteen couples attended the opening meeting.
1957 – 1958	The Rev. Principal Robert J. Wilson, an Elder in Fitzroy Avenue Church, Professor of Hebrew at the Presbyterian College and, later, its Principal, serves as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
1961	The Rev. Prof. James Haire, an Assistant Minister under Dr. Woodburn and an Elder in the Church, is a member of the New English Bible translation panel.





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1963	<p>Ian Fraser (DSO, OBE, DL, MD, MCh, FRCS, FRCSI), a Consultant Surgeon at the Royal Victoria Hospital, is awarded a Knighthood, having been awarded the OBE in 1940 and decorated for “<i>bravery under fire</i>” during World War Two. Sir Ian and Lady Fraser regularly attended Fitzroy.</p>	
1964	<p>Derek Graham, a member of the congregation and of the 9th Old Boys’ Harriers, represents Great Britain in the 5,000 Metres race at the Summer Olympic Games held in Tokyo. Derek, pictured setting a British 2-Mile Record, specialised in long-distance events and became the first Northern Irishman to run the Mile in under four minutes. He also represented Great Britain at the 1966 European Championships and Northern Ireland at the British Empire Games (1966) and the British Commonwealth Games in 1970.</p>	
1964	<p>Sam Baxter, a former member of the 9th B.B. Company, becomes President of the Methodist Church in Ireland.</p>	
5 th March 1968	<p>The Rev. R.E. Alexander is installed as the Moderator for the South Belfast Presbytery.</p>	
1968 – 1969	<p>The Rev. John (Jack) Herbert Withers, an Assistant Minister during the ministry of Dr. Woodburn, serves as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.</p>	



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1970 – 1971	<p>The Rev. Principal James L.M. Haire serves as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. He was Professor of Systematic Theology at the Presbyterian College and, later, Principal of Union Theological College. The Rev. Haire resumed the moderatorship upon the death of his successor, the Right Rev. Dr. Gibson,</p> <p>His son, the Rev. Professor James Haire was raised and confirmed in Fitzroy before serving as a missionary in Indonesia from 1972 to 1984 – he became President of the Uniting Church of Australia, a union of Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational denominations, and was President of the National Council of Churches in Australia in 2004.</p>	 
25 th May 1971	<p>Fitzroy brings an end to a long-standing tradition within the Presbyterian Church when the Committee unanimously decided:</p> <p><i>“that no one shall have any prior claim to a pew, or call any particular pew his own. That any one Church member or visitor, has a right to sit anywhere he pleases.”</i></p>	
1972 – 1973	<p>The Rev. Victor Lynas, a former member of the congregation and the 9th B.B. Company, serves as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. His father, William, was City Missionary at the McClure Street Mission Hall for forty years.</p>	
1st July 1973	<p>On the retirement of the Rev. J.J. Mulligan from the charge of Donegall Pass, its congregation moved to Fitzroy Avenue Church, which was renamed Fitzroy Presbyterian Church. A memorial tablet to the Rev. James Dewar B.A. and the Donegall Pass War Memorial tablet were transferred to the Fitzroy church.</p>	
1973	<p>The Rev. R. E. Alexander serves as Moderator of the Synod of Belfast.</p>	



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1974	<p>The hymn “March on my Soul” by William Wright MBE (died, 1924), an Elder in the congregation in 1913 and National Secretary of the YMCA, had been included in the 2nd Edition of the Presbyterian Hymnal – it was retained for the 3rd Edition, published this year and for the Irish Presbyterian Hymnbook issued in 2004. The hymn also appears in Anglican, Baptist and Methodist hymnals and in one used by churches in Australia. Because of the Fitzroy connection, the Rev. Godfrey Brown requested the hymn for his Ordination Service (9th Dec. 1960).</p>
14 th Feb. 1975	<p>The Rev. R. E. Alexander retires due to failing health – following his death in 1995, a memorial tablet was installed adjacent to the Rev. George Shaw Memorial Window in the South Transept.</p> 
1975	<p>Mr. Trevor Armstrong, Captain of the 9th BB Company, begins a two-year appointment as President of the Belfast Battalion of the Boys’ Brigade.</p>
1 st Jan. 1976	<p>The congregations of Fitzroy and Crescent (University Road) churches amalgamate – a memorial tablet to the Rev. Samuel Lindsay B.A. and the Crescent Church War Memorial tablet were transferred to Fitzroy Church. The Seceder Church in Berry Street had relocated to Linen Hall Street in 1839 and, in 1887, to University Road where it became the Crescent congregation. So, 163 years after the split over the “burgher” issue, the mother and daughter churches became one again.</p> 
15 th Jan. 1976	<p>The Rev. Dr. Kenneth N. E. Newell, who had latterly been a missionary in West Timor (Indonesia) and had formerly been Assistant Minister at Hamilton Road (Bangor), is installed as the church’s sixth minister.</p> 
1976	<p>Fitzroy Church not only has a new Minister but has three Senior Ministers – the Reverends Alexander (Fitzroy), Jackson (Crescent) and Mulligan (Donegall Pass).</p>
1976	<p>The current Manse at 64 Marryville Park is purchased for £24,500.</p>



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1981	Dr. Newell initiates contact with the Redemptorist Church of the Most Holy Redeemer at Clonard Monastery, leading to the establishment of the Fitzroy-Clonard Fellowship two years later.	
1982	Nigel Dalton is member of the Ulster Provincial Swimming Team that won the Relay event at the Inter-Provincial Championships held in Dublin.	
5th th April 1983	Due the repair work being carried out in the Church, an address by the Latin-American Evangelist, Dr. Luis Palau, has to be re-located to All Saints Church. His address, <i>New creation in Christ and the New Commandment</i> , was part of an event organised by the Irish Council of Churches and the Rev. Dr. Eric Gardner (Presbyterian Moderator) and the Rev. John Armstrong (Anglican Archbishop) were involved.	
16 th June 1984	Bishop Desmond Tutu, representing the South African Council of Churches, presents an address entitled <i>Jesus and the Justice of the Kingdom</i> . After his elevation to Archbishop, Desmond Tutu preached at Fitzroy for a second time in October 1993.	
1985	The architectural importance of Fitzroy Church is recognised when it is designated as a Grade B+ Historic Building by the Environment Heritage Service.	
1985 - 1989	Musician Joanne Hogg, of the world-renowned Celtic Rock band, Iona, worships at Fitzroy and plays a role in developing worship in the Church.	
22 nd April 1986	As part of the <i>Project Hope</i> event, the Rev. Dr. Robert Dickenson (Presbyterian Moderator) and Dr. Cahal Daly (Roman Catholic Bishop of Down and Dromore) participate in a seminar entitled <i>There is Hope – in Christ</i> . Despite vigorous and noisy protests outside the Church, 400 people attended the seminar.	
Jan 1987	Jim Alexander participates in <i>The Krypton Factor</i> .	
1987 - 1988	The Rev. Ken Newell serves as Moderator of the South Belfast Presbytery.	



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1988	Nicky McKee is a finalist in the Hennessey Literary Awards.
1988 – 1989	The Rev. Dr. Godfrey Brown, Assistant Minister (1957-1964), serves as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
May 1990	Fitzroy hosts a Biblical Conference involving the Rev. David Searle, Father Brendan McConvery and the Rev. Dr. George Carey (Anglican Bishop of Bath and Wells) – later in the year, Dr. Carey was chosen to become the next Archbishop of Canterbury.
14 th April 1991	The Church is involved in establishing The Way In (at 119 Fitzroy Avenue) as a resource for social outreach into the local community.
1992 – 1993	The Rev. Dr. John Dunlop, Assistant Minister (1964-1968), serves as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
20 th June 1995	Lady Mayhew, wife of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland) visits The Way In – her letter of thanks, in which she praises the work, is printed in the October 1995 edition of Fitzroy News .
21 st Sept. 1997	Fitzroy hosts a Service of Prayer for Belfast (entitled From Strangers to Friends) that is attended by Mr. Alban Maginness (Lord Mayor), Mr. Jim Rodgers (Deputy Lord Mayor) and representatives from various political parties.
1999	The Fitzroy-Clonard Fellowship, jointly led by Dr. Newell and Father Gerry Reynolds, is awarded the Pax Christi Peace Prize. 
2001 – 2002	The Rev. Dr. Alastair Dunlop, Assistant Minister (1971-1973), serves as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
2004 – 2005	The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Newell serves as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. 



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1 st Jan. 2005	Dr. Newell is awarded the Order of the British Empire in recognition of his cross-community and reconciliation efforts in Northern Ireland, the Investiture being performed by H.R.H Prince Charles at Buckingham Palace in March.	
May 2005	In the aftermath of the Tsunami on Boxing Day 2004, Ken and Val Newell visit Tamil Nadu Province in South East India as representatives of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland which donated £2 million to the reconstruction and relief work being carried out by Tear Fund and Christian Aid – a short film documenting the visit is produced.	
1 st July 2007	Dr. Ken Newell becomes the first Presbyterian Minister to hold the post of Ecumenical Canon of St. Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral in Dublin – the Rev. Professor. Enda MacDonagh is installed as Dr. Newell's fellow Ecumenical Canon on 5th July.	
Sept. 2008	The Very Rev. Dr. Kenneth N. E. Newell retires as minister of Fitzroy Presbyterian Church – a former member of the congregation, the Rev. Dr. Ian Hart of Great Victoria Street Church, is appointed as Convenor of the process to fill the vacancy.	