

MOUNTSANDEL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

TRUSTEES' REPORT

YEAR ENDING 31 JANUARY 2024

MOUNTSANDEL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP (NI 100058)

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PUBLIC BENEFIT

The Charitable purposes of Mountsandel Christian Fellowship from which public benefit is derived are:

- To glorify God and advance Christianity by bearing witness in word and action to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and to the truths of Christianity as set out in the Holy Bible
- To advance education by teaching the precepts of the Bible, and of Christian doctrine, to people of all ages thus exemplifying the Biblical principle that the 'church of the living God is a pillar and support of the truth'.
- To advance citizenship by inculcating Christian ethical behaviour in and among people of all ages.
- To respond to human need by relieving poverty.
- To promote reconciliation.
- To provide relief for those in need by reason of youth or financial disadvantage, whether in Coleraine, in Ireland or elsewhere throughout the world.

ANNUAL REVIEW 2023-24

SUNDAY MORNINGS

Numbers attending MCF on Sunday mornings have continued to grow, with about 200 adults now attending either regularly or semi-regularly. There are also a number of people who regularly watch the services online because they are unable to attend in person due to ill health. Sunday mornings in MCF provide a warm and welcoming environment where people can connect together, and includes musical worship, communion, prayer, an open sharing time, and teaching about the Bible and its relevance to everyday life. Three separate programmes (pre-school, primary, secondary) are provided for 70—80 children and young people, looked after by teams of volunteers.

NEWCOMERS

This year we have seen new people connecting with the church almost every week. These newcomers come from a wide variety of social and religious backgrounds - some have moved to MCF from other churches, some are new to the area, some have no church background, and some are returning to church after a period of disconnection.

During this year we welcomed 35 new people into membership of MCF.

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LEADERSHIP TEAM

We are committed to a team model of leadership, and currently have a diverse team of 12 people who share responsibility for planning and running the activities of the church. A smaller team of 5 elders carries the primary responsibility for the spiritual health of the church.

PASTORAL CARE

People within the church provide practical and emotional support for each other in a variety of ways. This often happens informally in the life of the church, and also through home groups and small groups. The elders and leaders of MCF are also available to provide pastoral support, especially at times of illness and bereavement. We also have a number of pastoral care teams which are available to provide various forms of help (meals, transport, visits, etc.).

At Christmas a team of volunteers delivered hampers to a variety of people who were struggling financially or emotionally, and also delivered “bags of blessing” to the homes around the Sandel Centre. In addition, in light of the current cost of living crisis, the church established a “hardship fund” which was able to provide financial help to families and individuals who were finding it difficult to pay the bills. We also distributed oil vouchers (donated by one of our members) to those struggling to heat their homes. All of these efforts have been warmly welcomed.

MISSION CO-ORDINATOR

Ricky Linton has continued in the role of Mission Coordinator. This role involves helping the church to be more effective in impacting the local neighbourhood and wider world with the love and message of Jesus. Ricky works closely with the Sandel Centre manager on ways of connecting the church to the local community and those who use the building every day

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YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Jenny Bruce continued in the role of Youth Worker, coordinating our volunteer teams and organising a wide variety of youth activities. The following activities currently happen regularly:

- **ANIMATE:** This is a creative Sunday evening youth group which has now developed a strong identity, and attracts about 30 young people from both church and neighbourhood. The group helps young people develop personally, socially and spiritually, and also find ways to serve the local community in practical ways.
- **EXPLORE:** A discussion group on Tuesday afternoons for young people (aged 12-14) who want to explore Christian faith and ask questions in a safe environment.
- **YOUTH HOME GROUP:** This is a small group for older teenagers (aged 15-18) which meets weekly. They explore different aspects of Christian faith and also seek to support and encourage each other.
- **WEEKENDS & CAMPS:** A group of more than 18 young people attended an Animate weekend away in Portrush in November 2023, and a group of 16 young people from MCF attended the Summer Madness festival in Portglenone in June 2023.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

The Sandel Centre hosts a wide variety of activities provide vital connection and community for different groups within our local community. These include a table tennis club, an Art Club, "Young at Heart" and "Wednesday Get-Together" (for older people), Jolly Tots (for babies and toddlers and their parents/carers), and Friday Fun Club (for Primary age children). This year we also ran seasonal community events at Christmas and Easter, as well as a special community festival week (Sandelfest) in August.

COMMUNITY GARDEN

The community garden continues to be an important resource and connection point for people in the neighbourhood. There are weekly opportunities for people to come and help in the garden, as well as special events at different times during the year. These included a kids' gardening club, a "story-time" for toddlers, and several opportunities for groups of children from church to be in the garden to learn and participate. The community garden team have also been invited by a local Mental Health Team to share their experience and skills in helping to start a new garden for patients on the Castlerock Road- this project is now flourishing.

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HOME GROUPS & SMALL GROUPS

These groups provide a smaller context where people can get to know each other better, share honestly, and encourage and pray for each other. They are also the primary context in which people can receive and give pastoral care for each other. Most of our home groups returned to meeting in person during this year. We currently have 9 groups meeting regularly, each with 8-16 people attending. We also have a number of smaller groups of 3 or 4 which meet regularly for support and encouragement.

MEN & WOMEN

MCF also provides a number of activities focused on the needs of women in our community, including a one-to-one mentoring programme (Women Journeying Together) and occasional Saturday morning Bible teaching mornings. There are also a number of events focused on the needs of men, including a Thursday-evening football group, participation in events hosted by Rumble (a ministry for men), and connections with a local Men's Shed in the Heights area of Coleraine.

DIGGING DEEPER

This is now an established ministry, seeking to serve the community in the Heights area of Coleraine, by offering help with gardening. The goal is to provide practical help and also some friendship for people who are isolated. The project also involved people from several other churches. There are now 5 teams which take turns going out on Saturday mornings during spring and summer. The project has been warmly welcomed and has been a help and encouragement to many people.

MISSION LINKS

As a church we have a connection with a number of missionaries and mission projects, which we seek to support in a variety of ways, including prayer, financial gifts, and pastoral support and friendship. This year these have included a link with Carlos and Ana Freitas, working with European Christian Mission in their native Portugal; Rachel Robinson, a young woman from our church who has been serving with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Cameroon; a young church plant in the city of Vlore in Albania; and an ongoing link with the work of Fields of Life in Uganda. We have also been continuing to develop new friendships and links with mission partners closer to home - with Chris and Hannah Agnew (pioneer church planters in Portrush), with Sligo City Church, with Christ in Youth (working with young people in the Republic of Ireland), and with Acacia Path (working with asylum seekers in the north coast region).

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UGANDA TEAM

A team from MCF traveled to Uganda in July with Fields of Life. The team included teenagers and adults with a wide variety of skills, and worked in two schools on northern Uganda as well as the surrounding communities. They provided a children's club in the schools, practical help with building/renovations, mental health training, business training, and the "I am girl" project (focused on period-health and sexual health for girls).

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

This year we were able to provide financial support to both overseas and local charities and their workers with significant funds targeted to help provide for those in need. Indicative gifts.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Our financial support was drawn from the voluntary contributions of the membership of Mountsandel Christian Fellowship. MCF Charitable Trust were the largest beneficiaries of the Fellowship (£86,000). In return Mountsandel Christian Fellowship benefitted from the services of three staff members. The Fellowship also contributed £7,700 to Causeway Voluntary Action Trust who in return took responsibility for the maintenance and other running costs of the facilities used by the Fellowship. Reserves grew by £9,451 to £87,665..

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Mountsandel Christian Fellowship is a charity registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland on 12th March 2014. Its governing documents are its Trust Deed and Governing Articles.

The Fellowship principally run the activities described above at The Sandel Centre, 6 Knocklynn Road, Coleraine, County Londonderry, BT52 1WT.

The charity trustees consist of the persons who currently serve as elders of the Fellowship and each trustee must be someone who has confirmed their acceptance of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith as stated in Article 15 of the governing document.

In setting our objectives and planning our activities for the year the trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities have helped to achieve the charity's purposes and provide a benefit to the beneficiaries.

The trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks.

MOUNTSANDEL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

The trustees who served during the year were:

Timothy Brown

Paul Martin

John-Mark Mullan

The two new trustees were added as follows:

Peter Howe (added September 2023)

Alan Hutton (added September 2023)

None of the trustees has any beneficial interest in Mountsandel Christian Fellowship.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees

J M Mullan

Trustee

13.11.2024

Date