

BELFAST/Belfast/St Bartholomew/St Bartholomew/Connor/Church of Ire- land

Stranmillis Parish, St Bartholomew's Church Trustees' Annual Report

For the year ended 31 December 2023



“In the community, for the community”

Charity Registration Number: NIC 101979

Stranmillis Parish, St Bartholomew's Church

Annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023

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References and administrative details

Charity Name: St Bartholomew's Church
Charity Registration Number: NIC 101979

Contact Address: St Bartholomew's Church
183 Stranmillis Road, Belfast BT9 5AJ

Trustees

Reverend Canon Kevin Graham MBE DL	Rector
Reverend Stephen Green	Curate Assistant
Irwin McFarland	Rector's Churchwarden
June McDermott	People's Churchwarden
Ian Berryman	Rector's Glebewarden
David Dennison	People's Glebewarden
Lisa Henderson	Honorary Secretary
Clodagh Dalzell	Honorary Treasurer (from 9 April 2024)
Florence Boyd	(resigned 9 April 2024)
Jennifer Ebbage	(from 9 April 2024)
Jill Gillespie	
David Olver	
David Sansom	
Elizabeth Sansom	
Renee Wilson	(resigned 9 April 2024)

The Trustees named above are all of the members of the Select Vestry who are also the current charity trustees.

Having served during the year ending 31 December 2023 at the Annual General Vestry meeting on 9th April 2024 the following Trustees stood down, Renee Wilson and Jennifer Ebbage. The following were elected as Trustees on the same date, Jill Gillespie and Clodagh Dalzell.

Principal Office-bearers

Clergy: Reverend Canon Kevin Graham MBE DL Incumbent and Chair of Trustees
Reverend Stephen Green Curate Assistant
Honorary Treasurer: Mrs Clodagh Dalzell (now also a trustee)
Honorary Secretary: Mrs Lisa Henderson

Independent Examiner:

Myles McKeown
McKeown Consultancy Ltd
NI676300
61 Rogan Manor
Newtownabbey
BT36 4BD

Bankers:

Ulster Bank
Business Direct Belfast
Ground Floor
Danesfort
Stranmillis Road
Belfast
BT9 5UB

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Clergy: Reverend Canon Kevin Graham MBE DL Incumbent and Chair of Trustees
Reverend Stephen Green Curate Assistant
Honorary Treasurer: Mrs Clodagh Dalzell (now also a trustee)
Honorary Secretary: Mrs Lisa Henderson

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023

The Trustees present the Annual Report and Statements of Receipts and Payments and Assets and Liabilities for St Bartholomew's Church for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Objectives and Activities

The charitable purpose of the Church of Ireland is the advancement of religion.

The principal function of St Bartholomew's Church of Ireland Stranmillis Parish is to support the advancement of the Christian religion by promoting, through the work of St Bartholomew's the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. Being open to and engaging with society, as a whole and offering support for those needing help are fundamental to the practical delivery of the benefits of Christianity.

As a result of activity in the pursuit of the advancement of the Christian religion, St Bartholomew's has custody of property and of records, materials and artefacts of significance to the cultural and religious heritage and maintenance of which is undertaken by the Select Vestry of St Bartholomew's.

Achievements, Performance & Public Benefit

St. Bartholomew's has been serving the area of Stranmillis since 1913. As a church, we believe that one of our primary callings is to share the love of Christ with the people of this area and further afield. Over the past year, we have done this through a wide range of activities as follows:

- 1) Church services were available for in person attendance and also continued to be live-streamed for those unable to attend.
- 2) General information was also posted on Facebook.
- 3) Pastoral support returned to normal during the year whilst caution was exercised when appropriate, such as wearing masks if visiting anyone particularly vulnerable. The Rector continued to ensure that Hospital Chaplains were informed of any parishioners as inpatients and they received spiritual support this way, as well as visiting hospitals and care homes in person.
- 4) A paper newsletter with a letter from the Rector and the daily prayers and readings continued to be delivered to the homes of those Parishioners not online by the Rector and other volunteers. This was valued by many parishioners who expressed their thanks and how it let them know that the Church was thinking of them and including them in church life and fellowship. Whilst all regulations

were removed during 2022 this means of communication remained operational throughout and will continue to do so for those unable to attend church. Copies are also made available for those who received them during the pandemic but now collect them in church for themselves.

- 5) We were able to have the complete set of activities and worship services over Christmas 2023. This included a Christmas Fair, A Seniors' Christmas lunch, a children's Christmas party, A Service for Christmas Holy Communion for Seniors with festive refreshments, the making of Christmas Swags, a Service of Nine Lessons and Carols, Midnight Communion, Christmas Day Services and a Nativity Play.
- 6) Sunday worship (weekly at 9:00am and 10.30am and monthly at 6.30pm) is at the heart of all we do and informs all our other activities. Whilst there was a core group of about 100 regular worshippers, nevertheless it is open to all regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background age or disability. Many comments have been received about the quality of the worship at St Bartholomew's and how it enables engagement with the Divine. We also have special worship services engaging with the wider community, namely opening of the academic year service for Stranmillis University College, Stranmillis University College Carol Service, Advent and Christmas Carol Services, Holy Week and Easter Services. We also have midweek services which offer a space for reflection and prayers for those ill in the wider community. After major acts of worship, refreshments are available to reinforce the sense of community.
- 7) During Sunday morning worship services in term time we have usually hold weekly Sunday School and Tots' Church where our children, from 20 months up to age twelve, learn more about our purposes as a church and through activities and stories, they learn in a fun way about the Christian Faith. Those attending continued to grow during 2023. Our children's ministry is a vital part of what we do.
- 8) Bart Players, an external amateur dramatic group meet twice weekly (Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:00pm) and put on several shows a year which draws in people from the wider community. The group is well known in the area and through their performances contribute to the finances of the parish.
- 9) We have two women groups, Ladies Guild and Mother's Union. The Ladies Guild is an opportunity to meet monthly and share fellowship together over a cup of tea and a bun. The Mother's Union organises monthly meetings open to all with invited speakers. They support families and family life in the parish and provide catering on many occasions. They also carry out housebound visitations and contribute to the funds of St Bartholomew's.

- 10) On the fourth Saturday of the month, except December, July and August the Men's Breakfast meets with a cooked breakfast available and an opportunity for those present to join in discussion and support. It is open to all men.
- 11) St Bartholomew's was a founding member of South Belfast Foodbank and continues to contribute to the work of the Foodbank by prayer, volunteers from the parish, food donations and financial assistance.
- 12) The weekly lunch club which started in October 2022 continued throughout the whole of 2023, with seasonal breaks at Christmas, Easter and summer. This group enjoy a hearty meal and good company. During the course of 2023 the lunch club was attended by both parishioners and non parishioners.
- 13) Following longstanding restrictions following the pandemic of 2020 onwards a renewed effort was focussed on fundraising. A new fund raising committee was formed and a very successful afternoon was organised in early autumn at short notice. More fundraising events are organised for 2024.
- 14) In Autumn 2023 St Bartholomew's, working in partnership with St Brigid's RC Church and Fisherwick Presbyterian Church, hosted a ten week Alpha Program to introduce the Christian Faith. This was a great witness to the local community of churches working together. Each congregation hosted at least three sessions, providing teaching and hospitality.

As a church, we also offer pastoral support to all in the community, regardless of whether they have any contact with St. Bartholomew's. This takes the form of visiting the sick, elderly and bereaved wherever they are located.

The trustees have had regard to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's statutory guidance on public benefit when relevant to ensure that the activities entered into during the year have helped to achieve the Parish's objectives and activities, as well as providing public benefit.

Financial Review

Our church building was completed in 1930 and will require some works in the mid to long term. Our church halls were completed in 1963 and require some modernisation. We continue to monitor finances closely and applying for other grants where appropriate.

Coronavirus Pandemic

The Trustees continue to assess the impact of the pandemic on fundraising, activities, uncertainty over future plans, going concern and financial impact and review the risk register regularly. As regulations ease the Trustees hope to return to a more normal pattern of fundraising.

Debts

An appeal for financial support was made to Parishioners during 2019 for repairs and maintenance and in particular for the costs of the boiler replacement and several loans from Parishioners were made to the Parish and a number of gifts were received. These loans have not been repaid as yet. The Parish has secured an overdraft facility as a safeguard.

Reserves Policy

The trustees review the availability of any unrestricted reserves at each select vestry meeting. The trustees keep a tight control of costs. Given the size and activities of the charity the trustees have been unable to build up any significant reserves and income is expended during the financial year. Some necessary and preventative refurbishment of the church was carried out 2023 and none are planned for 2024. There are no other major works planned. There is a reserve amount in an NS&I account which is in a restricted fund.

Investment Policy

In keeping with common practice our endowments are invested with Representative Church Body and Church of Ireland Trustees.

Going Concern

We have reviewed the budget for the year ahead and are satisfied that there are adequate funds in place to ensure that the Parish can continue its activities and the financial statements for the year end 31 December 2023 can be signed off as a going concern.

Pay and remuneration

The Incumbent of the Parish, the Rector, is entitled to a stipend that is paid directly by the Parish which is in accordance with figures approved by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland and office and food money allowances and pension contributions (as is seen by examination of the accounts). The Rector is a trustee and Chair of the Select Vestry. The incumbent provides his services under a contract for services and other trustees provide professional services on occasion. Expenses are payable to reimburse costs incurred on a vouched basis.

Organisational structure

The Select Vestry is responsible for the day-to-day management of the parish. The Select Vestry consists of the members of the clergy serving in the parish, the Rector, the churchwardens, the globe wardens and generally not more than twelve other members of the General Vestry elected at the Annual General Vestry.

The incumbent or other member of the clergy officiating in the parish chairs the Select Vestry. Select Vestry members are responsible for making decisions on matters of general concern and importance to the parish including deciding how parish funds are to be applied.

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing Document and Constitution of the Charity

Chapter III of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland governs Parishes and Parochial Organisation. The Select Vestry members are the Charity Trustees

Recruitment and Appointment of Select Vestry (Trustees)

All members of the Church of Ireland who are over the age of 18 and are either resident within the Parish or live elsewhere but have been accustomed members of the congregation for at least three months and subscribe to the parish by a means for which a receipt may be issued may register as members of the General Vestry of the parish allowing them to attend and vote at meetings of the General Vestry and to stand for election to the Select Vestry. Meetings of the General Vestry are held at least once a year. The Select Vestry is elected as part of this General Vestry meeting. The Select Vestry will hold their positions for a period of approximately one year. Select Vestry members may be re-elected annually and there is no limit on the number of terms which may be served.

Pay and remuneration

The Incumbent of the Parish, the Rector, is entitled to a stipend that is paid directly by the Parish, which is in accordance with figures approved by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland and office and locomotory allowances and pension contributions (as is seen by examination of the accounts). The Rector is a Trustee and Chair of the Select Vestry. The organist provides his services under a contract for services and other trustees provide professional services on occasion. Expenses are payable to reimburse costs incurred on a vouched basis.

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The incumbent or other member of the clergy officiating in the parish chairs the Select Vestry. Select Vestry members are responsible for making decisions on matters of general concern and importance to the parish including deciding how parish funds are to be applied.

The Select Vestry meets at times fixed by the members. Special meetings may be convened at any time by the chairperson or the churchwardens. In 2023 the Select vestry met nine times with a quorum present each time.

Compliance with Public Benefit

The trustees have considered the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's statutory guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities entered into during the year have furthered the Parish's objectives, for the public benefit.


Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the statement of receipts and payments and statement of assets and liabilities in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

The law applicable to charities in Northern Ireland with Income of less than £250,000 requires the trustees to prepare a statement of receipts and payments and a statement of assets and liabilities for each financial year.

The trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the Parish's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the assets and liabilities of the Parish. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Parish and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Signed on Behalf of the Trustees

Trustee 1: 

Trustee 2: 

Date: 10/9/24