

# BELFAST/Belfast:Mount Merrion/The Church of the Pentecost/ Down & Dromore / Church of Ireland

Northern Ireland · Charity number 102093

## Details

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**Known as** Mount Merrion Parish Church

**Status** Received

**Registered** 2015-02-19

**Register** [View on the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland register](#)

## Contact

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**Address** C/O 122 Mount Merrion Avenue  
Belfast  
BT6 0fs  
BT6 0FS

**Phone** 02895 921926

**Email** [office@mountmerrionchurch.org.uk](mailto:office@mountmerrionchurch.org.uk)

**Website** [www.mountmerrionchurch.co.uk](http://www.mountmerrionchurch.co.uk)

## Activities

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**Purposes:** The principal function is to support the advancement of the Christian religion by promoting through the work of the Parish 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 is fundamental to the practical delivery of the tenets of Christianity. As a result of activity in pursuit of the advancement of the Christian religion, the Parish has custody of a large body of records, materials and artefacts of significance to the cultural heritage, the maintenance of which is undertaken by the Parish as a secondary charitable purpose.

**What the charity does:** The advancement of religion

**How the charity works:** Religious activities

**Who the charity helps:** General public

## Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-12-31	£161,919	£102,377	£0	2

## Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Miss Erin Galway		
Miss Sharon Brown		
Mr Daniel Graham		
Mr Jim Garland		
Mr Joe Green		
Mr Reginald Collins		
Mr Samuel Green		
Mrs Alison Moore		
Mrs Brenda Smith		
Mrs Heather Graham		
Mrs Jackie Moates		
Mrs Phyllis Jackson		
Mrs Rachel Skillen Martin		
Mrs Sharon Stinson		
Mrs Yvonne Summerville		
Ms Joanne Stewart		
Rev Lucy Burden		

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# Accounts

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# MOUNT MERRION PARISH CHURCH

## Statement of Receipts and Payments - Year ended 31 December 2025

	Unrestricted/ Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds	Total Funds
<b>Receipts</b>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
	£	£	£	£	£
Offerings and Donations including Gift Aid Refunds	100,740	58,453	-	159,193	125,826
Grants	-	-	-	-	7,500
Programme Income	488	-	-	488	1,115
Rental - Hire of Church Hall	924	-	-	924	1,441
Proceeds from Fund Raising Events	1,156	-	-	1,156	1,940
Bank /investment Income	158	-	-	158	131
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>103,466</b>	<b>58,453</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>161,919</b>	<b>137,953</b>
<b>Payments</b>					
Salary Costs	Note 4	52,160	8,648	-	60,808
Diocesan Levy		7,536	-	-	6,900
Church & Hall Running Costs		8,548	-	-	12,252
Church & Hall Repairs and Refurbishment		2,243	5,487	-	8,568
Rectory Costs		5,699	-	-	2,239
Programme costs		6,092	200	-	5,759
Support Costs (inc. Equipment/IT)		2,220	-	-	1,770
Mission and Charitable Donations		3,009	-	-	2,700
Fund Raising Costs		325	-	-	467
Bank Fees / Other Payments		210	-	-	192
<b>Total Payments</b>		<b>88,042</b>	<b>14,335</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>103,475</b>
<b>Excess/(Deficit) of Receipts to Payments for the year</b>		<b>15,424</b>	<b>44,118</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>34,478</b>

# MOUNT MERRION PARISH CHURCH

## Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31 December 2025

	Unrestricted/ Designated Funds <u>2025</u> £	Restricted Funds <u>2025</u> £	Endowment Funds <u>2025</u> £	Total Funds <u>2025</u> £	Total Funds <u>2024</u> £
<b><u>Cash Funds (Note 2)</u></b>					
Current Account/Cash	59,628	68,194	-	127,822	68,280
<b>Total Cash Funds</b>	<b>59,628</b>	<b>68,194</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>127,822</b>	<b>68,280</b>

				Value <u>2025</u> £	Value <u>2024</u> £
<b><u>Investment Assets (Note 1)</u></b>					
CIT Unit Trusts	-	-	-	212	208
<b>Total Investment Assets</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>208</b>

			Value <u>2025</u> £	Value <u>2024</u> £
<b><u>Assets retained for Parish's own use (Note 1)</u></b>				
Church/ Memorial Garden	Heritage Asset		-	-
Church Hall	Heritage Asset		-	-
Rectory	Deemed Cost		190,000	190,000
Fixtures & Fittings	Cost		4,584	-
			<b>194,584</b>	<b>190,000</b>

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

 Sharon Brown

Date: 18 March 2026

# MOUNT MERRION PARISH CHURCH

## Notes to the Financial Statements - Year ended 31 December 2025

### 1. Accounting Policies.

Set out below are the principal accounting policies which have been adopted in the compilation of the Statement of Receipts and Payments and the Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

#### *(a) Statement of Receipts and Payments*

All items of income and expenditure included within the Statement of Receipts and Payments have been accounted for on a cash receipts basis.

#### *(b) Statement of Assets and Liabilities.*

The **assets of the Parish retained for Parish's own use** comprise:-

- Church Building and Memorial Garden.
- Church Hall
- Rectory
- Fixtures and Fittings

The Church Building and the Memorial Garden are deemed to be 'Heritage assets' as defined by the Charities SORP (FRS102). No value is included on the Statement of Assets and Liabilities as information on the cost or valuation is not available and such information cannot be obtained at a cost commensurate with the benefit to the users of the accounts and to the Parish. Church artefacts are also treated as 'Heritage assets'.

The Church Hall is attached to the Church and is not separable as an individual asset. As such it is also deemed to be a Heritage asset and no value is ascribed to it on the Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

The Rectory (the title of which is vested in the RCB) is situated adjoining the Church grounds. It is included on the Statement of Assets and Liabilities at agent's estimated sale value (January 2017). No depreciation has been provided as the current estimated residual value is not less than its carrying value, it is well maintained in good repair and remaining useful life is expected to exceed 50 years.

Fixtures and fittings, office equipment and other assets are fully accounted for in the year of acquisition through the Statement of Receipts and Payments. The Trustees have determined that only individual / group items exceeding a cost of £3,000 will be shown in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities. These are initially recognised at cost and depreciated on a straight-line basis over a period of 5 years.

The **Investment Assets** comprise CIT Unit Trusts. These are initially recorded at cost and then subsequently stated at fair value at each year end date.

## 2. Reconciliation of Cash Funds.

	2025 £	2024 £
Total Cash Funds at 1 January	68,280	33,802
Receipts for year	161,919	137,953
Payments for year	(102,377)	(103,475)
<b>Total Cash Funds at 31 December</b>	<b>127,822</b>	<b>68,280</b>

## 3. Movement of Funds

	At 1 Jan 2025 £	Incoming Resources £	(Outgoing Resources) £	Transfers £	At 31 Dec 2025 £
<b>Endowment Funds -</b> Steadman Bequest	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Restricted Funds</b>					
Hinchley Trust Grant - RES	5,784	-	(5,784)	-	-
Fitness Hub Grants- RES	255	-	-	-	255
Outreach Sundry Grants and Donations – RES	3,065		(3,065)	-	-
Building Fund - RES	14,972	58,453	(5,486)	-	67,939
<b>TOTAL Restricted</b>	<b>24,076</b>	<b>58,453</b>	<b>(14,335)</b>		<b>68,194</b>
<b>Designated and Unrestricted Funds</b>					
Outreach Fund – DES	6,453	7,237	(4,423)	3,000	12,267
Music Fund – DES	1,172	-	(1,172)	-	-
Building Fund – DES	14,058	1,556	-	-	15,614
General Fund	22,521	94,673	(82,447)	(3,000)	31,747
<b>TOTAL Designated and Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>44,204</b>	<b>103,466</b>	<b>(88,042)</b>	-	<b>59,628</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<b>68,280</b>	<b>161,919</b>	<b>(102,377)</b>	-	<b>127,822</b>

### 3. Movement of Funds (cont'd)

#### Purpose of Endowment Fund

- Income from the Edward Steadman Bequest is to be used for the upkeep of the Church.

#### Purpose of Restricted Funds

These are funds restricted to the specific purpose for which the funds are given.

- *Hinchley Trust.* This fund receives restricted grants from the Hinchley Trust to be used as specified on outreach work in the Parish. The grant spent in 2025 was towards the employment of the Children and Families Worker
- *Fitness Hub.* This fund receives restricted grants towards the costs of the Fitness Hub – equipment, running costs etc.
- *Outreach Sundry Grants and Donations.* This fund receives restricted grants and donations to be used as specified on community outreach projects.
- *Building Fund.* This fund receives restricted grants and donations towards the costs of specified building projects

#### Purpose of Designated Funds

- *Designated Outreach Funds (various).* These funds include grants and donations (with a broad rather than specific purpose) to be used for outreach purposes and other monies set aside by the Trustees to assist meeting the costs of outreach projects.
- *Designated Music Fund.* This fund receives donations to be used for music and worship activities.
- *Designated Building Fund.* This fund includes grants and donations (with a broad rather than specific purpose) to be used for building-related purposes.

#### Unrestricted Funds

- *General Fund.* This fund is made up of all income on which there is no restriction and is available to cover the running costs and upkeep of the Church.

#### 4. Transactions with Trustees.

The Parish paid expenses of £5,699 (2024 - £2,239) relating to the running costs of the Rectory which is occupied by the incumbent. This covers rates and repairs / maintenance and in 2025 included expenses of £4,511 on the rectory fencing, garden and garage repairs.

Payments made during the year by the Parish either to or on behalf of the incumbent during 2025 amounted in total to £52,229 (2024 - £ 51,692 ) being in respect of Salary cost, NIC costs, Locomotory expenses, Pension cost and Office Allowance (paid in accordance with stipend figures approved annually by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland and Locomotory expenses, Office Allowance and Pension contributions made in accordance with approved rates issued by R.C.B).

The only other payments made to any Trustee are in respect of re-imburement of small expense items paid by them to third parties on behalf of the Church. These are immaterial in value and of no direct benefit to the Trustees.

#### 5. Collections for Third Parties

	2025	2024
	£	£
4 Peaks – Team Dot	-	2,866
4 Peaks – NI Hospice	-	2,866

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# Accounts

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# MOUNT MERRION PARISH CHURCH

## Statement of Receipts and Payments - Year ended 31 December 2024

	Unrestricted/ Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds	Total Funds
	<u>2024</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Receipts</b>					
Offerings and Donations including Gift Aid Refunds	104,901	20,925	-	125,826	91,908
Grants	-	7,500	-	7,500	3,815
Programme Income	1,115	-	-	1,115	2,556
Rental - Hire of Church Hall	1,441	-	-	1,441	2,086
Proceeds from Fund Raising Events	1,940	-	-	1,940	4,163
Bank /investment Income	125	-	6	131	107
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>109,522</b>	<b>28,425</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>137,953</b>	<b>104,635</b>
<b>Payments</b>					
Salary Costs <span style="float: right;">Note 4</span>	57,934	4,694	-	62,628	77,154
Diocesan Levy	6,900	-	-	6,900	7,284
Church & Hall Running Costs	12,016	230	6	12,252	9,945
Church & Hall Refurbishment	2,796	5,772	-	8,568	-
Rectory Costs	2,239	-	-	2,239	1,590
Rectory Refurbishment	-	-	-	-	7,288
Programme costs	5,759	-	-	5,759	7,342
Support Costs (inc. Equipment/IT)	1,770	-	-	1,770	2,721
Mission and Charitable Donations	2,700	-	-	2,700	2,200
Fund Raising Costs	467	-	-	467	288
Bank Fees / Other Payments	192	-	-	192	215
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>92,773</b>	<b>10,696</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>103,475</b>	<b>116,027</b>
<b>Excess/(Deficit) of Receipts to Payments for the year</b>	<b>16,749</b>	<b>17,729</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>34,478</b>	<b>(11,392)</b>

# MOUNT MERRION PARISH CHURCH

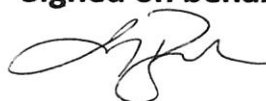
## Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31 December 2024

	Unrestricted/ Designated Funds <u>2024</u> £	Restricted Funds <u>2024</u> £	Endowment Funds <u>2024</u> £	Total Funds <u>2024</u> £	Total Funds <u>2023</u> £
<b><u>Cash Funds (Note 2)</u></b>					
Current Account/Cash	44,204	24,076	-	68,280	33,802
<b>Total Cash Funds</b>	<b>44,204</b>	<b>24,076</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>68,280</b>	<b>33,802</b>

				Value <u>2024</u> £	Value <u>2023</u> £
<b><u>Investment Assets (Note 1)</u></b>					
CIT Unit Trusts	-	-	-	208	189
<b>Total Investment Assets</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>189</b>

			Value <u>2024</u> £	Value <u>2023</u> £
<b><u>Assets retained for Parish's own use (Note 1)</u></b>				
Church/ Memorial Garden	Heritage Asset		0	0
Church Hall	Heritage Asset		0	0
Rectory	Deemed Cost		190,000	190,000
Fixtures & Fittings	Deemed Cost		0	0
			<b>190,000</b>	<b>190,000</b>

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

 Sharon Brown

Date:

3/4/25

# MOUNT MERRION PARISH CHURCH

## Notes to the Financial Statements - Year ended 31 December 2024

### 1. Accounting Policies.

Set out below are the principal accounting policies which have been adopted in the compilation of the Statement of Receipts and Payments and the Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

#### *(a) Statement of Receipts and Payments*

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- Fixtures and Fittings

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The Rectory (the title of which is vested in the RCB) is situated adjoining the Church grounds. It is included on the Statement of Assets and Liabilities at agent's estimated sale value (January 2017). No depreciation has been provided as the current estimated residual value is not less than its carrying value, it is well maintained in good repair and remaining useful life is expected to exceed 50 years.

Fixtures and fittings, office equipment and other assets are recognised at cost and depreciated on a straight line basis over a period of 5 years. The Trustees have determined that only individual items exceeding a cost of £3,000 will be capitalised. The exception is project assets acquired through grant funding which are fully accounted for in the year of acquisition through the Statement of Receipts and Payments - Funding shown under Grants and cost of assets under Programme Costs.

The **Investment Assets** comprise CIT Unit Trusts. These are initially recorded at cost and then subsequently stated at fair value at each year end date.

## 2. Reconciliation of Cash Funds.

	2024 £	2023 £
Total Cash Funds at 1 January	33,802	45,194
Receipts for year	137,953	104,635
Payments for year	(103,475)	(116,027)
<b>Total Cash Funds at 31 December</b>	<b>68,280</b>	<b>33,802</b>

## 3. Movement of Funds

	At 1 Jan 2024 £	Incoming Resources £	(Outgoing Resources) £	Transfers £	At 31 Dec 2024 £
<b>Endowment Funds -</b> Steadman Bequest	-	6	(6)	-	-
<b>Restricted Funds</b>					
Hinchley Trust Grant - RES	2,978	7,500	(4,694)	-	5,784
Fitness Hub Grants- RES	255	-	-	-	255
Outreach Sundry Grants and Donations – RES	200	2,865	-	-	3,065
Building Fund - RES	2,914	18,060	(6,002)	-	14,972
<b>TOTAL Restricted</b>	<b>6,347</b>	<b>28,425</b>	<b>(10,696)</b>		<b>24,076</b>
<b>Designated and Unrestricted Funds</b>					
Outreach Fund – DES	10,355	4,105	(10,507)	2,500	6,453
Music Fund – DES	2,499	-	(1,327)	-	1,172
Building Fund – DES	660	13,560	(162)	-	14,058
General Fund	13,941	91,857	(80,777)	(2,500)	22,521
<b>TOTAL Designated and Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>27,455</b>	<b>109,522</b>	<b>(92,773)</b>	-	<b>44,204</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<b>33,802</b>	<b>137,953</b>	<b>(103,475)</b>	-	<b>68,280</b>

### 3. Movement of Funds (cont'd)

#### Purpose of Endowment Fund

- Income from the Edward Steadman Bequest is to be used for the upkeep of the Church.

#### Purpose of Restricted Funds

These are funds restricted to the specific purpose for which the funds are given.

- *Hinchley Trust.* This fund receives restricted grants from the Hinchley Trust to be used as specified on outreach work in the Parish. The current grant is towards the employment of a Children's and Family Worker
- *Fitness Hub.* This fund receives restricted grants towards the costs of the Community Fitness Hub – equipment, running costs etc.
- *Outreach Sundry Grants and Donations.* This fund receives restricted grants and donations to be used as specified on community outreach projects.
- *Building Fund.* This fund receives restricted grants and donations towards the costs of specified building projects

#### Purpose of Designated Funds

- *Designated Outreach Funds (various).* These funds include grants and donations (with a broad rather than specific purpose) to be used for outreach purposes and other monies set aside by the Trustees to assist meeting the costs of outreach projects.
- *Designated Music Fund.* This fund receives donations to be used for music and worship activities
- *Designated Building Fund.* This fund includes grants and donations (with a broad rather than specific purpose) to be used for building-related purposes.

#### Unrestricted Funds

- *General Fund.* This fund is made up of all income on which there is no restriction and is available to cover the running costs and upkeep of the Church.

#### 4. Transactions with Trustees.

The Parish paid expenses of £2,239 (2023 - £1,590) relating to the running costs of the Rectory which is occupied by the incumbent. This relates to rates and repairs and maintenance.

Payments made during the year by the Parish either to or on behalf of the incumbent during 2024 amounted in total to £51,692 (2023 - £ 50,468) being in respect of Salary cost, NIC costs, Locomotory expenses, Pension cost and Office Allowance (paid in accordance with stipend figures approved annually by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland and Locomotory expenses, Office Allowance and Pension contributions made in accordance with approved rates issued by R.C.B).

The only other payments made to any Trustee are in respect of re-imburement of small expense items paid by them to third parties on behalf of the Church. These are immaterial in value and of no direct benefit to the Trustees.

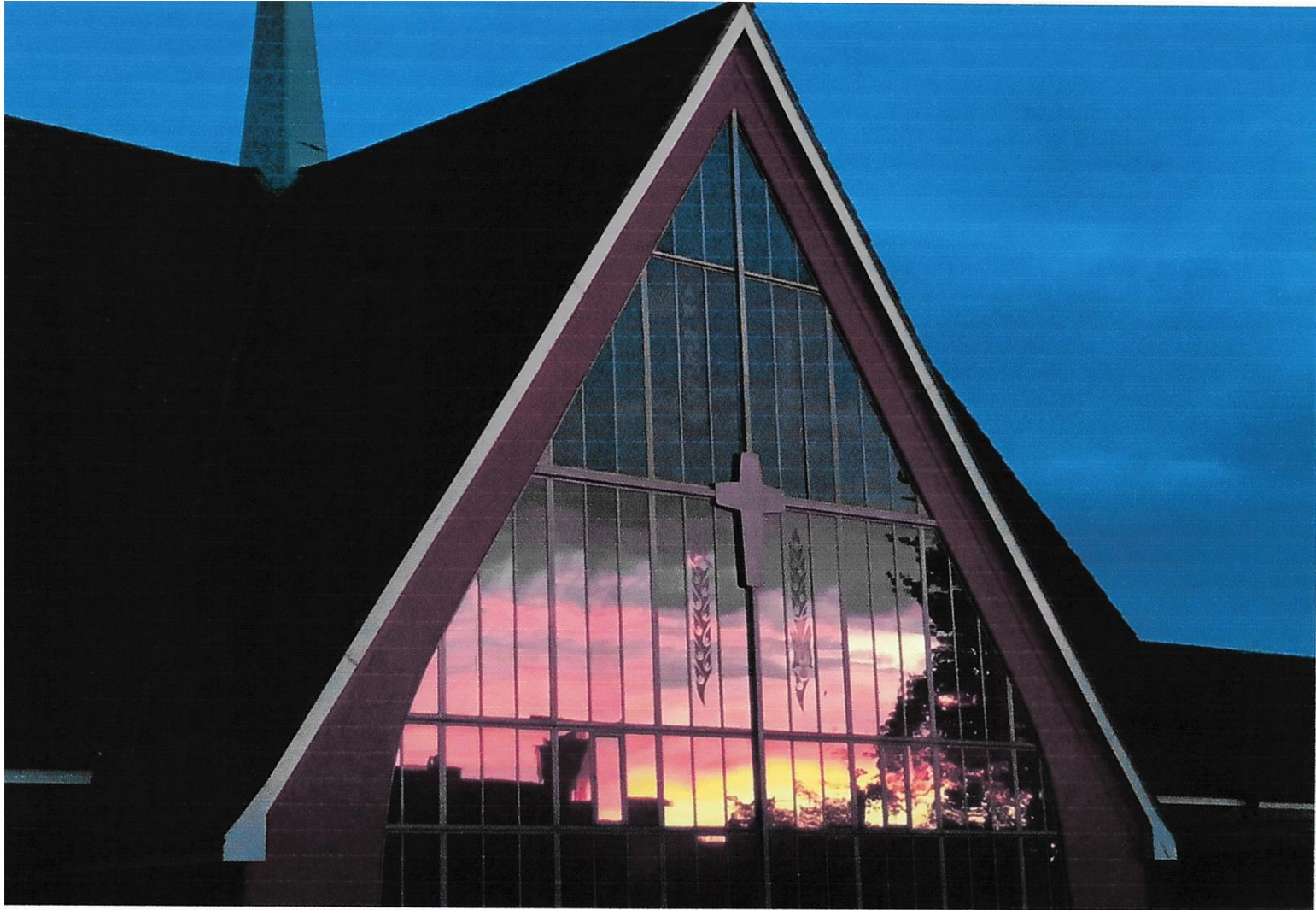
#### 5. Collections for Third Parties

	2024	2023
	£	£
Bishop's Appeals		557
Community Centre (Coronation Day)		380
4 Peaks – Team Dot	2,866	-
4 Peaks – NI Hospice	2,866	-

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# Annual report

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**Belfast: Mount Merrion / The Church of The Pentecost /  
Down & Dromore / Church of Ireland**

**TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT  
AND STATEMENTS OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS  
AND ASSETS AND LIABILITIES  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024**

**Charities Number: NIC 102093**

# **MOUNT MERRION PARISH CHURCH**

## **Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024**

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# MOUNT MERRION PARISH CHURCH

## REFERENCES AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Charity Name: **Mount Merrion Parish Church**      Registration Number: **NIC 102093**

Contact Address: **122 Mount Merrion Avenue, Belfast, BT6 0FS**

### **Trustees who acted during 2024 and until approval of the Trustees' Report and Financial Statements on 3 April 2025**

The incumbent (Rev. Lucy Burden) is Chair of the Trustees. Other trustees are appointed annually for a term of one year. Elections to appoint for 2024/2025 were held on 14 March 2024.

- Sharon Stinson
- Sharon Brown
- Phyllis Jackson
- Yvonne Summerville
- Jim Garland
- Danny Graham
- Ella Blakely
- Heather Green
- Alison Moore
- Jim Moore
- Anne Ringland
- Joanne Stewart
- Matt Blair (appointed 14 March 2024)
- Erin Galway (appointed 14 March 2024)
- Jackie Moates (appointed 14 March 2024)
- Brenda Smith (appointed 14 March 2024)
- Dennis Campbell (until 14 March 2024)
- Janine Ogilby (until 14 March 2024)
- Iain Slater (until 14 March 2024)
- William Stinson (until 14 March 2024)

### **PRINCIPAL OFFICE BEARERS**

Clergy and Chair: Rev. Lucy Burden

Hon. Treasurer: Sharon Brown

Hon. Secretary: Sharon Stinson

Rector's Church Warden: Phyllis Jackson

People's Church Warden: Yvonne Summerville

### **INDEPENDENT EXAMINER**

Nicola Robinson

31 Jellicoe Avenue, BT15 3GA

### **BANKERS**

Danske Bank, P.O. Box 183

Donegall Square West, Belfast, BT1 6JS

# **TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT**

## **for the year ended 31 December 2024**

### **1. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

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

The principal function of Mount Merrion Parish Church is to support the advancement of the Christian religion by promoting, through the work of Mount Merrion Parish Church, 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, Mount Merrion Parish Church 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 Mount Merrion Parish Church.

### **2. ACHIEVEMENTS, PERFORMANCE & PUBLIC BENEFIT**

This section summaries the main activities undertaken during 2024 to deliver the vision, charitable purpose and objectives of Mount Merrion Parish Church; what has been achieved as a result of these activities; and the ensuing benefits to church members, the local community and others.

#### **2.1 Vision**

Mount Merrion Parish Church is committed to continue growing as a church that is:

- Grounded in Scripture
- Fuelled by prayer
- Evangelistic in mission
- Open to the Holy Spirit's leading
- Dedicated to service and outreach
- Generous in giving
- Inclusive of all ages

This vision reflects not only our spiritual priorities but also our desire to serve and impact our local community in a meaningful way.

## 2.2 Worship and Prayer

During 2024, the church saw measurable growth in attendance and the level/depth of engagement with church activities signalling a church that is not only increasing in numbers but also thriving in relationships and maturing spiritually.

Attendance at our main Sunday worship service increased by 11% (to an average of 81) with a noticeable rise in the number of young adults and new families joining the church family. The number of children in kids and tots church doubled.

Various other worship events were held during 2024 including our Sunday evening SOAK sessions, a time dedicated to worshipping God, listening to what God wants to say to us corporately and individually through his word, and a time to receive prayer ministry.

All that we do as a church is fuelled by prayer. We set aside time to pray together weekly before our Sunday service and prayer is woven into various church activities that take place throughout the week including the Bible Study and Lifegroups. During Lent 2024, we met in a family home for weekly prayer beginning at 7.15am.

## 2.3 Discipleship

Discipleship seeks to help individuals grow in their faith and become more effective followers and witnesses for Christ. Discipleship activities within the church during 2024 included:

- Lifegroups, the Men's Group and Monday Bible Study
- Short courses
- One-to-one intentional discipleship, drawing alongside individuals to support and encourage them to grow in their walk with God

Lifegroups (and other small group) gatherings offer a space to go deeper into God's word and to encourage and pray for each other. In addition to the spiritual benefits of these groups, they enable deeper connections and friendships to be formed, evidenced in the practical help and emotional support members provide to each other in times of need. Lifegroups met fortnightly, the Monday Bible Study weekly and the Men's Group monthly during 2024 with 45 people attending at least one of these groups.

The church holds at least one Alpha course each year with 12 people attending the 2024 course held in January – March 2024. The Alpha course allows attendees to learn and ask questions about the Christian faith in a relaxed and informal setting.

During Autumn, the church held an 8-week discipleship course (entitled Practicing the Way) which explored various spiritual disciplines that can be helpful as an 'apprentice' of Jesus. This was attended by 25 people. The format of video followed by small group discussion enabled attendees to get to know each other at a deeper level and encourage each other in their faith journey.

## **2.4 Pastoral Care and Practical Support**

At Mount Merrion, our heart is to serve God by serving people. As well as caring for church members, we believe in being a visible, caring presence in the local community offering prayer, practical support, and hope in everyday life and significant moments

### **2.4.1 Pastoral Care**

Pastoral care is ongoing, responding to needs as they arise, being shaped by compassion and a desire to walk alongside people through all seasons of life. This includes:

- Conducting baptisms, weddings and funerals and providing support before and after these significant life events
- Being present in times of illness, loss, personal difficulty, or unexpected change
- Visiting those who may be experiencing isolation including the elderly and housebound
- Celebrating with people in good times, recognising that laughter and love are part of spiritual care too

### **2.4.2 Practical Support**

During 2024, the church continued to partner with both the South Belfast and East Belfast Foodbanks. As a referring agency for both of these Trussell Trust Foodbanks, we issue food vouchers to individuals in need. This approach not only addresses the immediate concerns of food poverty but also aims to tackle the root causes of poverty by connecting individuals with the comprehensive services they need.

## **2.5 Giving to Others**

As a church we tithe 10% of our regular income from church members to mission. We seek to spread our support across charities that have a global, national and local reach. In 2024, we supported the work of Open Doors, Casa Reom, SAMS, the National Churches Trust, Christians Against Poverty (local branch), the Bishop's 'Bikes for Maridi' Appeal, New Wine Ireland, the Rumble Network and our own local outreach activities.

In June, four church members undertook the 4 peaks challenge raising over £8,500 which was split equally between Team Dot (a local community charity), the NI Hospice (in memory of Poppy Ogle) and the church Outreach Fund.

During the harvest service, the church collected food and household products to support the local foodbanks with the total donated being 218kg which the South Belfast Foodbank told us will provide 518 meals.

At Christmas, church members filled 35 shoeboxes for the Operation Christmas Child appeal which were then sent to disadvantaged children around the world. Toys and vouchers were also collected on behalf of Team Dot for onward distribution to needy families in the local community.

## **2.6 Community Engagement**

The church is physically located at the heart of the Cregagh estate with a significant number of church members drawn from the local area. As a church we are committed to engaging with and serving the local community as an expression of the love of Jesus.

### **2.6.1 Regular activities**

Regular activities open to and attended by the wider community include: Mount Merrion Tots on Tuesdays, ladies craft class on Wednesdays, a community drop-in on Thursdays, and fitness classes on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

### **2.6.2 Special events**

Easter and Christmas are important seasons for the church and particular efforts are made around these times to encourage the wider community to join with us through personal invitation, distribution of 'calendar of event' cards and social media promotion.

During Holy Week, we opened our church doors for two days of dedicated prayer and reflection. We created an immersive experience whereby we transformed the inside of the church into a symbolic roadway, guiding people on a poignant journey to the cross. This innovative setup not only fostered engagement but also provided a reflective space for individuals to deepen their connection with the significance of the Easter season. The response from both church members and community residents was heartening, as many came together to pray, reflect, and engage in meaningful conversations about faith and hope.

In December we hosted a well-attended Christmas market with 20 craft stalls and refreshments available. Children were able to visit Santa in his inflatable grotto (with a gift provided to each child), have their face painted, post a letter to Santa and do some Christmas crafts. In addition, we held a Christmas wreath-making evening attended by 18 women which provided an opportunity for fun and fellowship around a practical activity.

At Christmas we also ventured into the streets holding a carol-singing event outside the local shops. This joyful activity brought together members of our church and members of the wider community. We gave away books and selection boxes as gifts to members of the public as they passed by.

### **2.6.3 Children and Families**

The addition of a Children/Families Worker in August 2022 has increased both the capacity and quality of our ongoing work with children and families. Our heart is to foster a sense of community among families, providing opportunities for families to come together both within and outside the church buildings.

Mount Merrion Tots is held weekly and is attended by both church families and families from the wider community. A total of 73 parents and 88 children were registered during 2024. The leaders are committed to providing a warm, welcoming environment where children and parents feel safe and valued. While the tots engage in fun and stimulating activities, parents have the opportunity to connect with each other, share experiences and foster friendships.

One of the most well attended children/family events in 2024 was our light party (alternative Halloween party) which saw over 80 people come in. This free event which included music, arts and crafts, games, face-painting and refreshments served not only as a fun gathering but also as a meaningful opportunity to reach beyond our church walls and engage with the community.

Another highlight was the Summer Holiday Bible Club in August with 30 children attending over the course of 4 days. This was held in the local community centre as it was recognized that families who were unfamiliar with church might feel more comfortable sending their children into an environment they used daily. Feedback was very positive with numbers growing each day as word spread and led to some children/families starting to attend church regularly.

#### **2.6.4 School Links**

The church enjoys a positive and mutually supportive relationship with the local primacy school, Cregagh Primary. Our Rector sits on the board of governors and takes part in school assemblies.

In June, the church collaborated with the school to host the P7 prizegiving assembly in the church and at Christmas, the Key Stage 1 Nativity, an important community event for families and friends, was held in the church

One of our church members is the school's main STEM Ambassador, giving technical support to teachers and inspiring children in STEM subjects through attendance at school technical events. He also heads up the Connect with Tech initiative, launched in 2021 through funding from The Allchurches Trust. During 2024 this project provided coding lessons to P7 classes and trained P6 children in camera and production skills culminating in these children producing the video recording of the Key Stage 1 Nativity service. In addition, school teaching staff were supported in the recording and editing of the P7 prizegiving assembly.

#### **2.6.5 Fitness Hub**

The church's Fitness Hub is part of the East Belfast community health initiative and registered as such on a community app. During 2024, the Fitness Hub offered a variety of classes led by trained coaches including: Spin, Pilates, Kettlebells, Legs-Bums-Tums and Zumba. A new Mums and Babies fitness class began, which was fully booked from the beginning of the classes, demonstrating a need for these kinds of facilities. In total during 2024 there were 122 classes with an average attendance of 10 in each class.

The friendly informal nature of the classes is preferred by many of the participants over a traditional gym environment as the classes not only provide physical fitness benefits but also a space for social interaction where friendships can be formed.

#### **2.6.6 Partnerships**

Mount Merrion recognises the value of partnership working in enabling the church to extend its reach and impact. Links have been made with statutory agencies and charities working within the area including two local foodbanks and Team Dot, a well-known local family-based charity that provides grass roots support to those in need within the community.

The church has regular contact with other local churches with mutual support for activities/ events hosted by other churches in the area. During 2024, the Mount Merrion men's group joined with the men's group from St Andrews Presbyterian church to jointly host a series of events for Dads looking at Christian parenting skills for fathers. The men's groups from both churches also joined with other men from East Belfast to hold a prayer walk around the Cregagh Estate.

The church also has links with local businesses and are thankful for the funding and other support provided by these businesses for special events and community activities.

## **2.7 Resources**

### **2.7.1 Staff and Volunteers**

The church has two paid staff, the Rector and part-time Children/Families Worker (part funded by Hinchley Charitable Trust).

The staff are supported by a volunteer team of over 45 church members who work in many different roles to ensure that Sunday services, regular church and community activities, and special events are not only a reality but also a reflection of our vision to be a church marked by service and outreach.

Development of our staff and volunteer team continued in 2024 through on-the-job training and attendance at courses which included:

- Safeguarding training
- Diocesan Governance and Finance training
- Lifegroup Leader training
- Pastoral Visiting training

The Rector completed the Arrow leadership training course and will be re-investing what she has learnt as part of the leadership team for future cohorts.

### **2.7.2 Facilities**

During 2024, the church continued to follow its Maintenance Plan to ensure routine and periodic tasks are completed at appropriate points in the year. This included professional inspection, servicing and testing of the gas boilers, lightning protection system, fire alarm system, fire extinguishers and the emergency lights.

For some years, the church has recognised a problem with the heating situation in the church as the internal temperature of the building struggled to rise more than 4°C above the outside temperature, making it particularly uncomfortable during the colder months. A temporary solution was put in place.

During 2024, an architect was appointed and a schedule of works drawn up to address the heating situation. Proposed works include installing new roof insulation, where none previously existed, and replacing the existing heating system with a more energy efficient solution, together with associated works. Additionally, there is potential to further improve the thermal performance by replacing the existing glazed wall with new triple glazing.

These improvement works will result in a much more stable and comfortable environment for worship gatherings, and community events which is vital not only for the well-being of the current congregation but also to support the ongoing growth the church has experienced in recent years.

Fundraising for this work was ongoing during 2024 with a projected start date for the work in 2026 (subject to funding being secured).

## **2.8 Social Media and Promoting Access**

The church maintains a presence across all our social media platforms recognising that many people today rely on social media to connect and access information. Our Facebook and Instagram pages are updated regularly keeping everyone informed about ongoing activities and special events.

We continue to upload sermons to our YouTube channel, allowing people to stay connected and giving those who missed Sunday services the chance to catch up later in the week. We are also able to offer live streaming of weddings and funerals, should that be requested by family members.

Most activities of the church are free of charge. Where there are charges, these are kept to a minimum with the aim of ensuring that cost is not a barrier to access.

## **2.9 Safeguarding and Mitigating Harm**

The Select Vestry has sought to mitigate any potential harm arising from its activities by adhering to the Church of Ireland's child protection policy, Safeguarding Trust, and the Church of Ireland's Adult Safeguarding policy.

Access to the church is restricted to named key holders. Adequate insurance is maintained, and health and safety and fire risk assessments are undertaken at regular intervals.

The church has the top Food Hygiene rating of five, awarded by Belfast City Council's Environmental Health Department.

## **2.10 Public Benefit**

The Parish has given careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit 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.

### 3. FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financial Reports are reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Select Vestry (Trustees) and also reviewed on completion of the Annual Accounts.

Over the year ended 31 December 2024, total receipts (£137,953) exceeded total payments (£103,475) by £34,478 increasing the total cash funds held from £33,802 (31 December 2023) to £68,280 (31 December 2024).

This is the strongest financial position that the church has been in for many years reflecting both an increase in numbers but also a growing sense of ownership and commitment amongst church members. This position enables us to invest more confidently in ongoing church and community outreach activities as well as move forward with the planned building improvement work to address the heating situation anticipated to commence in 2026 (subject to sufficient funds being secured).

At a Fund level:

- The General Fund balance (unrestricted monies) increased by £8,580 from £13,941 (31 December 2023) to £22,521 (31 December 2024) primarily due to an increase in regular giving by church members
- The Building Fund (restricted/designated) increased by £25,456 from £3,574 (31 December 2023) to £29,030 (31 December 2024) primarily as a result of targeted fundraising activities including the Building Fund Gift Day, Christmas Gift List, Barn Dance, Christmas Market, Quiz Nights and Coffee Mornings
- Restricted /designated funds for Outreach increased by £1,769 from £13,788 (31 December 2023) to £15,557 (31 December 2024) being bolstered by funds from the 4 peaks challenge while the Music Fund decreased by £1,327 from £2,499 (31 December 2023) to £1,172 (31 December 2024)

In March 2021, the Select Vestry adopted a reserves policy which can be summarised as follows:

*The Select Vestry aims to achieve a position where free reserves in the general fund (the unrestricted fund) equate to approximately two months' normal general fund expenditure. The Select Vestry recognises that the Church has been operating with less than one month's reserves for many years and therefore a target of 4 years has been set to achieve this policy position.*

The free reserves in the general fund (the unrestricted fund) at 31 December 2024 were £22,521 which represents about three months normal general fund expenditure.

### 4. GOING CONCERN

The Trustees have reviewed the anticipated receipts and payments for the year ahead and are satisfied that there are adequate funds in place to ensure that the Church can continue its activities and that the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024 can be signed off as a going concern.

## **5. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.1 Governing Document and Constitution**

Chapter 3 of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland governs parishes and parochial organisations. The Select Vestry members are the Charity Trustees.

### **5.2 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, 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 one year. Select Vestry members may be re-elected annually and there is no limit on the number of terms which may be served.

### **5.3 Pay and Remuneration**

The incumbent of the Parish is paid directly by the Parish and receives a stipend (salary) in accordance with the figures approved annually by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland. In addition, Locomotory Expenses Allowance, Pension Contributions and Office Allowance are paid at the approved rates issued by the Representative Church Body (R.C.B.) (see Note 4 to the Financial Statements).

Other staff are paid at rates linked to the National Joint Council (NJC) pay scales.

### **5.4 Organisational Structure**

The Select Vestry is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Parish. The Select Vestry consists of the incumbent serving in the Parish, the church wardens, the glebe wardens and generally not more than twelve other members of the General Vestry elected at the General Vestry Meeting/Easter Vestry.

The Select Vestry is chaired by the incumbent or other member of the clergy officiating in the Parish. 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 or the Diocesan Synod. Special meetings may be convened at any time by the chairperson or the church wardens. The Select Vestry met 8 times during 2024, with an average attendance of 84%.

## 5.5 Statement of Trustee's Responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the Statements of Receipts and Payments and 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 irregularities.

**Signed on behalf of the Trustees:**

 Sharon Brown

**Date:**

3/4/25

**BELFAST/Belfast:Mount Merrion/The Church of the Pentecost/ Down & Dromore / Church of Ireland**

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102093

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# Annual return

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# MOUNT MERRION PARISH CHURCH

## Independent Examiner's Report to the Charity Trustees of Mount Merrion Parish Church

I report on the Accounts of Mount Merrion Parish Church for the year ended 31 December 2024 which are set out on pages 15 to 20.

### Respective responsibilities of Charity Trustees and Examiner

As the Charity's Trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts under section 65 of the Charities Act.
- Follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Commissioner under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act.
- State whether particular matters have come to my attention.

### Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

I have examined your charity accounts as required under section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charities Commission for Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act.

My examination included a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also included consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as Charity Trustees concerning any such matters.

My role is to state whether any material matters have come to my attention giving me cause to believe:

1. That accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 63 of the Charities Act.
2. That the accounts do not accord with those accounting records.
3. That the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act.
4. That there is further information needed for proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

**Independent Examiner's Report (Cont'd).**

I have completed my examination and have no concerns in respect of the matters (1) to (4) listed above and, in connection with following the Directions of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, I have found no matters that require drawing to your attention.

Signed: N Robinson ACA

Ms Nicola Robinson

31 Jellicoe Avenue, BT15 3GA

Date: 9 April 2025

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# Accounts

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# MOUNT MERRION PARISH CHURCH

## Statement of Receipts and Payments - Year ended 31 December 2023

	Unrestricted/ Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds	Total Funds
	<u>2023</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Receipts</b>					
Offerings and Donations including Gift Aid Refunds	90,408	1,500	-	91,908	89,344
Grants	-	3,815	-	3,815	40,210
Programme Income	2,556	-	-	2,556	5,180
Rental - Hire of Church Hall	2,086	-	-	2,086	2,953
Proceeds from Fund Raising Events	2,748	1,415	-	4,163	1,963
Bank /investment Income	102	-	5	107	92
Other income	-	-	-	-	260
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>97,900</b>	<b>6,730</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>104,635</b>	<b>140,002</b>
<b>Payments</b>					
Salary Costs <span style="float: right;">Note 4</span>	62,838	14,316	-	77,154	74,357
Diocesan Levy	7,284	-	-	7,284	7,200
Church & Hall Running Costs	9,940	-	5	9,945	14,910
Rectory Costs <span style="float: right;">Note 4</span>	1,590	-	-	1,590	1,996
Programme costs	6,737	605	-	7,342	15,648
Support Costs (inc. Equipment/IT)	2,721	-	-	2,721	2,778
Mission and Charitable Donations	2,200	-	-	2,200	2,750
Fund Raising Costs	288	-	-	288	267
Rectory Refurbishment	7,288	-	-	7,288	4,783
Bank Fees / Other Payments	215	-	-	215	240
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>101,101</b>	<b>14,921</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>116,027</b>	<b>124,929</b>
<b>Excess/(Deficit) of Receipts to Payments for the year</b>	<b>(3,201)</b>	<b>(8,191)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(11,392)</b>	<b>15,073</b>

# MOUNT MERRION PARISH CHURCH

## Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31 December 2023

	Unrestricted/ Designated Funds <u>2023</u> £	Restricted Funds <u>2023</u> £	Endowment Funds <u>2023</u> £	Total Funds <u>2023</u> £	Total Funds <u>2022</u> £
<b><u>Cash Funds (Note 2)</u></b>					
Current Account/Cash	27,455	6,347	-	33,802	45,194
<b>Total Cash Funds</b>	<b>27,455</b>	<b>6,347</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>33,802</b>	<b>45,194</b>

				Value <u>2023</u> £	Value <u>2022</u> £
<b><u>Investment Assets (Note 1)</u></b>					
CIT Unit Trusts	-	-	-	189	181
<b>Total Investment Assets</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>181</b>

				Value <u>2023</u> £	Value <u>2022</u> £
<b><u>Assets retained for Parish's own use (Note 1)</u></b>					
Church/ Memorial Garden	Heritage Asset			0	0
Church Hall	Heritage Asset			0	0
Rectory	Deemed Cost			190,000	190,000
Fixtures & Fittings	Deemed Cost			0	0
				<b>190,000</b>	<b>190,000</b>

**Signed on behalf of the Trustees:**


Sharon Brown  
 Date: 4.9.24 4.9.24

# MOUNT MERRION PARISH CHURCH

## Notes to the Financial Statements - Year ended 31 December 2023

### 1. Accounting Policies.

Set out below are the principal accounting policies which have been adopted in the compilation of the Statement of Receipts and Payments and the Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

#### *(a) Statement of Receipts and Payments*

All items of income and expenditure included within the Statement of Receipts and Payments have been accounted for on a cash receipts basis.

#### *(b) Statement of Assets and Liabilities.*

The **assets of the Parish retained for Parish's own use** comprise:-

- Church Building and Memorial Garden.
- Church Hall
- Rectory
- Fixtures and Fittings

The Church Building and the Memorial Garden are deemed to be 'Heritage assets' as defined by the Charities SORP (FRS102). No value is included on the Statement of Assets and Liabilities as information on the cost or valuation is not available and such information cannot be obtained at a cost commensurate with the benefit to the users of the accounts and to the Parish. Church artefacts are also treated as 'Heritage assets'.

The Church Hall is attached to the Church and is not separable as an individual asset. As such it is also deemed to be a Heritage asset and no value is ascribed to it on the Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

The Rectory (the title of which is vested in the RCB) is situated adjoining the Church grounds. It is included on the Statement of Assets and Liabilities at agent's estimated sale value (January 2017). No depreciation has been provided as the current estimated residual value is not less than its carrying value, it is well maintained in good repair and remaining useful life is expected to exceed 50 years.

Fixtures and fittings, office equipment and other assets are recognised at cost and depreciated on a straight line basis over a period of 5 years. The Trustees have determined that only individual items exceeding a cost of £1,000 will be capitalised. The exception is project assets acquired through grant funding which are fully accounted for in the year of acquisition through the Statement of Receipts and Payments - Funding shown under Grants and cost of assets under Programme Costs.

The **Investment Assets** comprise CIT Unit Trusts. These are initially recorded at cost and then subsequently stated at fair value at each year end date.

## 2. Reconciliation of Cash Funds.

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Total Cash Funds at 1 January	45,194	30,121
Receipts for year	104,635	140,002
Payments for year	(116,027)	(124,929)
<b>Total Cash Funds at 31 December</b>	<b>33,802</b>	<b>45,194</b>

## 3. Movement of Funds

	At 1 Jan 2023 £	Incoming Resources £	(Outgoing Resources) £	Transfers £	At 31 Dec 2023 £
<b>Endowment Funds -</b> Steadman Bequest	-	5	(5)	-	-
<b>Restricted Funds</b>					
Halifax Foundation (Anthem) - RES	285	-	(285)	-	-
Arts Council NI (Anthem) – RES	7,700	(684)	(7,016)	-	-
Hinchley Trust Grant - RES	3,098	7,500	(7,620)	-	2,978
Fitness Hub Grants- RES	255	-	-	-	255
Outreach Sundry Grants – RES	3,200	(3,000)	-	-	200
Building Fund - RES	-	2,914	-		2,914
<b>TOTAL Restricted</b>	<b>14,538</b>	<b>6,730</b>	<b>(14,921)</b>		<b>6,347</b>

### 3. Movement of Funds (cont'd)

	At 1 Jan 2023 £	Incoming Resources £	(Outgoing Resources) £	Transfers £	At 31 Dec 2023 £
<b>Designated and Unrestricted Funds</b>					
<i>Outreach Fund – DES</i>	9,989	8,285	(10,019)	2,100	10,355
<i>Anthem /Music Fund – DES</i>	4,125	8,483	(10,109)		2,499
<i>Building Fund – DES</i>	-	660	-		660
<i>General Fund</i>	16,542	80,472	(80,973)	(2,100)	13,941
<b>TOTAL Designated and Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>30,656</b>	<b>97,900</b>	<b>(101,101)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>27,455</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<b>45,194</b>	<b>104,635</b>	<b>(116,027)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>33,802</b>

#### Purpose of Endowment Fund

- Income from the Edward Steadman Bequest is to be used for the upkeep of the Church.

#### Purpose of Restricted Funds

These are funds restricted to the specific purpose for which the funds are given.

- *Anthem Funds (various)*. These funds receive restricted grants and donations towards the costs of running the Anthem project - salary, equipment, materials, etc.
- *Hinchley Trust*. This fund receives restricted grants from the Hinchley Trust to be used as specified on outreach work in the Parish. The current grant is towards the employment of a Children's and Family Worker
- *Fitness Hub*. This fund receives restricted grants towards the costs of the Community Fitness Hub – equipment, running costs etc.
- *Outreach Sundry Grants*. This fund receives restricted grants to be used as specified on community outreach projects.
- *Building Fund*. This fund receives restricted grants and donations towards the costs of specified building projects

### Purpose of Designated Funds

- *Designated Outreach Funds (various)*. These funds include grants and donations (with a broad rather than specific purpose) designated for outreach purposes and other monies set aside by the Trustees to assist meeting the costs of outreach projects.
- *Designated Anthem / Music Fund*. This fund includes tuition fee income from the Anthem project and donations (with a broad rather than specific purpose) for the Anthem project and other Music activities
- *Designated Building Fund*. This fund includes grants and donations (with a broad rather than specific purpose) designated for building-related purposes.

### Unrestricted Funds

- **General Fund**. This fund is made up of all income on which there is no restriction and is available to cover the running costs and upkeep of the Church.

## **4. Transactions with Trustees.**

The Parish paid expenses of £1,590 (2022 - £1,996) relating to the running costs of the Rectory which is occupied by the incumbent. This relates to rates and repairs and maintenance. In addition, £7,288 was spent on bathroom refurbishment.

Payments made during the year by the Parish either to or on behalf of the incumbent during 2023 amount in total to £50,468 (2022 - £ 46,034) being in respect of Salary cost, NIC costs, Locomotory expenses, Pension cost and Office Allowance (paid in accordance with stipend figures approved annually by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland and Locomotory expenses, Office Allowance and Pension contributions made in accordance with approved rates issued by R.C.B).

The only other payments made to any Trustee are in respect of re-imburement of small expense items paid by them to third parties on behalf of the Church. These are immaterial in value and of no direct benefit to the Trustees.

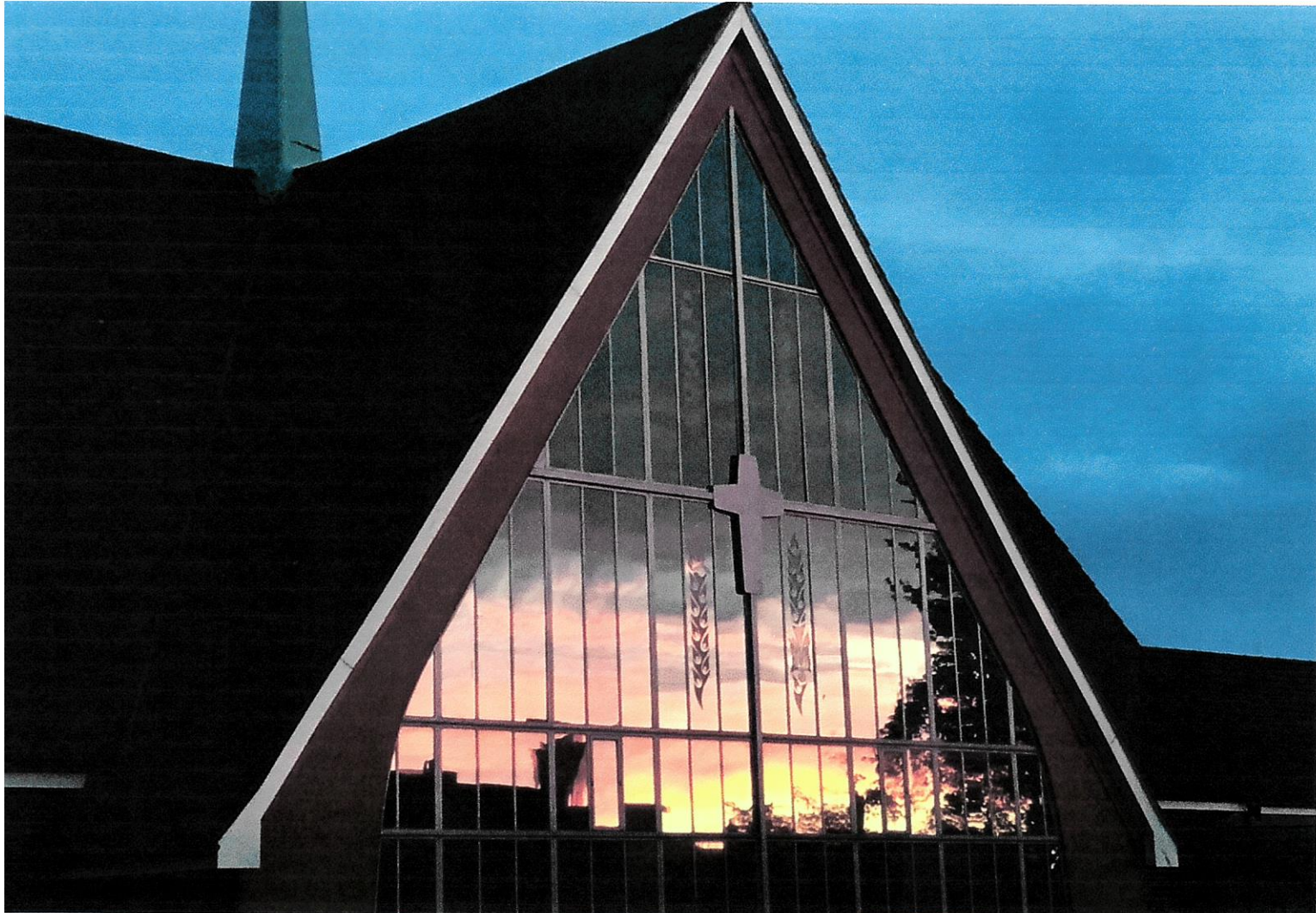
## **5. Collections for Third Parties**

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Bishop's Appeals	557	225
Community Centre (Coronation Day)	380	-

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# Annual report

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**Belfast: Mount Merrion / The Church of The Pentecost /  
Down & Dromore / Church of Ireland**

**TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT  
AND STATEMENTS OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS  
AND ASSETS AND LIABILITIES  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

**Charities Number: NIC 102093**

# **MOUNT MERRION PARISH CHURCH**

## **Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 December 2023**

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# MOUNT MERRION PARISH CHURCH

## References and Administrative Details:

Charity Name: **Mount Merrion Parish Church**      Registration Number: **NIC 102093**

Contact Address: **122 Mount Merrion Avenue, Belfast, BT6 0FS**

## Trustees who acted during year ended 31 December 2023

The incumbent (Rev Lucy Burden during 2023) is Chair of the Trustees. Other trustees are appointed annually for a term of one year. Elections to appoint for 2023/2024 were held on 30 March 2023.

- Sharon Stinson – Hon. Secretary
- Sharon Brown – Hon. Treasurer
- Phyllis Jackson – Church Warden (Rector's)
- Yvonne Summerville – Church Warden (People's)
- Jim Garland – Glebe Warden (Rector's)
- Danny Graham – Glebe Warden (People's)
- Ella Blakely
- Dennis Campbell
- Heather Green
- Alison Moore
- Jim Moore
- Janine Ogilby
- Anne Ringland
- Iain Slater
- Joanne Stewart
- William Stinson
- Yvonne Summerville

The following acted during the period:

## 1 January to 31 March 2023

- Jim Garland – Hon. Secretary
- Phyllis Jackson – Church Warden (People's)
- Dennis Campbell – Glebe Warden (People's)
- Hollyanne Boyce
- Davy McAuley
- Rebekah Ogilby

## PRINCIPAL OFFICE BEARERS

Clergy and Chair: Rev. Lucy Burden

Hon. Treasurer: Sharon Brown

Hon. Secretary: Sharon Stinson

Rector's Church Warden: Phyllis Jackson

People's Church Warden: Yvonne Summerville

## INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Nicola Robinson

31 Jellicoe Avenue, BT15 3GA

## BANKERS

Danske Bank, P.O. Box 183

Donegall Square West, Belfast, BT1 6JS

# **TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT**

## **for the year ending 31 December 2023**

### **1. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

The principal function of Mount Merrion Parish Church is to support the advancement of the Christian religion by promoting, through the work of Mount Merrion Parish, 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, Mount Merrion Parish Church 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 Mount Merrion Parish.

### **2. ACHIEVEMENTS, PERFORMANCE & PUBLIC BENEFIT**

During 2023, the church has continued to see growth and has endeavoured to respond to the needs of both church members and the local community. All our normal church and community activities are up and running. This report includes an account of the church's ongoing activity throughout the past year.

#### **2.1 Worship**

Throughout 2023, we have been committed to our core values of being a praying, resourcing, sending, and growing church; a church that facilitates encounters with Jesus in worship, who believes in miracles, and who contends for the transformation of our community. We have seen an increased hunger for the return of activities within the life of the church and are delighted that we have leaders and volunteers to facilitate these different aspects of ministry.

Our goal is to ensure that everything we do is intentional and creates meaningful opportunities for connection within our church and the wider community. Above all, we are dedicated to guiding people towards Jesus, so that they may experience transformation and grow to become more like Him.

We have continued to experience growth and have seen an increase in attendance at our church services, particularly among individuals aged 19 to 30. This demographic shift has been particularly encouraging, as it reflects a vibrant engagement from younger members of our community. We are excited about the potential for deeper connections and involvement amongst this age group, which is essential for the vitality of our church moving forward. We have also seen growth in our Kids and Toddler church.

In addition to traditional Sunday morning services, we held worship evenings, team nights, and prayer gatherings, all attended by and benefiting a diverse range of age groups. We continued our SOAK sessions, a time dedicated to worshipping God, listening to what God wants to say to us corporately and individually through his word, and a time to receive prayer ministry.

We deeply appreciate the efforts of our teams and volunteers who work diligently to ensure that our Sunday services and special events are not only a reality but also a reflection of our reverence for the name of Jesus. We have seen a rise in individuals capable of leading worship, which has greatly enriched our church community.

## **2.2 Prayer**

Prayer is fundamental to the Christian faith and therefore we seek to be a praying church. We pray together weekly as a group before our main service and these times are important as we pray for the world, the needs of our community and ourselves. Prayer is also weaved throughout our other weekly gatherings, especially in our Lifegroups, where we take time to receive prayer requests and pray over one another over an extended period of time. During Holy week in 2023, our Young Adults opened their home for weekly prayer beginning at 7.15am each week in the run up to Easter.

We have seen people healed, both from physical, mental and emotional pain, new leaders have been resourced for many of our ministries in church, and we have released and equipped people as well as watching many of our members encountering Jesus in new and fresh ways. Under God, we have sought to encourage our church and community to love each other as Jesus did.

## **2.3 Discipleship**

Discipleship is at the heart of what we do in Mount Merrion. We seek to equip the saints and encourage people to step into their giftings for the glory of God. Our discipleship efforts are multifaceted, aimed at empowering individuals to grow in their faith and become more effective witnesses for Christ. We have implemented various initiatives to achieve this goal, including:

- One-to-one intentional discipleship, where we draw alongside those who need support and encouragement and spend some time encouraging them to grow in their walk with God.
- Lifegroups
- Mens group
- Womens group
- Alpha
- Lectio Divina prayer course

Lifegroups are an important part of our discipleship programme. They are an extension of what we do on Sunday mornings seeking to be a source of encouragement, a space to go deeper into God's word and a place where we can receive a level of accountability in our walk with God. We also encourage missional outreach in our Lifegroups, where we encourage our groups to think about how they can serve each other and our community.

In January 23 we ran an 8-week Alpha course introducing people to the Christian faith. The format allows people to explore the Christian faith in small groups in an open and honest way, with support and encouragement for individuals to find their own answers. This resulted in a number of people coming to faith and attending church regularly.

In addition, various individuals attended events and conferences throughout the year that helped them along their faith journey. These included:

- Bishop's Bible Week
- New Wine leaders conference
- New Wine Ireland summer conference
- Alpha Leadership conference
- Arrow Leadership

## **2.4 Pastoral**

Pastoral care by clergy and staff continues to be a priority. The church and community can avail of pastoral care as and when needed. We seek to provide comfort and encouragement to anyone who finds themselves or those they love in need of help and support.

The church holds a silver category award as a 'Safe Place' for those who are victims of domestic abuse.

## **2.5 Mission**

As a congregation we tithe 10% of our income to mission. We seek to support at least one charity that has a global reach, one more national and one local. In 2023 we continued to support the work of Open Doors, Casa Reom, Christians Against Poverty, the National Churches Trust, New Wine Ireland, and our own local outreach activities.

As is our usual custom, members of the congregation donated 33 shoeboxes filled with goodies to the Operation Christmas Child appeal which are then sent to disadvantaged children around the world.

We are committed to partnering with others in Mission and are part of the Cregagh Churches Together group.

## **2.6 Community & Outreach**

The church buildings are used extensively throughout the week for activities and events open to the wider community including:

*Regular weekly activities* such as Mount Merrion Tots, music tuition (now ended), ladies craft class, a community drop-in on Thursdays, fitness classes

*Occasional activities* such as the Christmas craft fair, men's breakfasts, special events for children/families and around Holy Week/Christmas, hosting for Ulster Rugby matches

### **2.6.1 Special events**

During Holy Week 2023, we opened our church doors for two days of dedicated prayer, inviting both our congregation and the wider community to participate. We created an immersive experience, where we transformed the inside of the church into a symbolic roadway, guiding people on a poignant journey to the cross. This innovative setup not only fostered engagement but also provided a reflective space for individuals to deepen their connection with the significance of the Easter season. The response from both church members and community residents was heartening, as many came together to pray, reflect, and engage in meaningful conversations about faith and hope.

In December 2023, we celebrated Christmas together by reaching out to the community and inviting them to be part of all that we were doing over the Christmas season. Alongside the usual gathering for a Nativity service, a Carol service, a Christmas Eve service and a Christmas Day service we also had a 'Messy Christmas' an event for families in the community to come along to.

We also ventured into the streets holding a carol-singing event outside the local shops. This joyful activity brought together both members of our church and members of the community. We also gave away selection boxes to members of the public as they passed us by.

### **2.6.2 Children and Families**

The addition of a Children/Families Worker in August 2022 (part funded by Hinchley Charitable Trust) has increased both the capacity and quality of our work with children and families. We have been able to increase the support and training offered to our volunteers. This has included providing resources, and opportunities that empower our leaders to create a more engaging and spiritually enriching environment for our children. We have focused on fostering a sense of community among families, organising opportunities for families to come together both within and outside the church buildings.

We consider our Mums and Tots program to be a vital community resource, as demonstrated by the steady growth in attendance we have witnessed from local families. This increasing participation highlights how much this space is need for the community. Our dedicated leaders and volunteers have worked tirelessly to create a warm, welcoming environment that ensures parents and caregivers feel safe and appreciated. In this nurturing space, participants have the opportunity to connect with others, share experiences, and foster friendships, all while enjoying engaging activities designed for young children.

One of the most well attended children/family events in 2023 was our light party (alternative Halloween party) which saw over 100 people come in. This event served not only as a fun gathering but also as a meaningful opportunity to reach beyond our church walls and engage with the community. We provided a hot meal during this event and activities for children to engage with.

Our Summer Holiday Bible Club in August 2023 was another highlight with 30 children attending over the course of 3 days. This was held in the local community centre as it was recognized that families who were unfamiliar with church might feel more comfortable sending their children into an environment they used daily. Feedback was very positive with numbers growing each day as word spread and led to some children/families starting to attend church regularly.

### **2.6.3 Schools Work**

The church enjoys a positive and mutually supportive relationship with the local primacy school, Cregagh Primary. Our Rector sits on the board of governors and takes part in school assemblies. At Christmas, the church hosted the Key Stage 1 Nativity, an important community event for families and friends.

During 2023, our children/families worker had the opportunity to deliver R.E classes to the Primary one children as well as teach part-time in the school supporting children with their Maths and English. This enabled good relationships to be built with both staff and children.

One of our church members is the school's main STEM Ambassador, giving technical support to teachers and inspiring children in STEM subjects through attendance at school technical events. He also heads up the Connect with Tech initiative, launched in 2021 through funding from The Allchurches Trust. During 2023 this project provided coding lessons to P7 classes and trained P6 children in camera and production skills culminating in these children producing the video recording of the Key Stage 1 Nativity service. In addition, school teaching staff were supported in learning coding teaching skills at the W5 centre.

### **2.6.4 Anthem Project**

Anthem was designed to cultivate new songs and sounds from every corner of the community, empowering children and young people to thrive as the next generation of creatives. Throughout the duration of the project, participants benefited from weekly music lessons, with many students receiving free lessons. The project provided all necessary materials and equipment at no extra cost to the parents or students, thereby ensuring that financial barriers did not hinder access to quality music education. Several students successfully passed their music exams, further demonstrating the project's positive impact on their creative development and growth.

This project reached its completion in July 2023, but before its conclusion, the church hosted a celebration evening that brought together students, parents, tutors and supporters. It was a joyful occasion filled with stories highlighting the transformative impact of music on many lives.

### **2.6.5 Fitness and Mental Health initiatives**

The church's Fitness Hub is viewed as an important aspect of caring for people's physical needs. It is part of the East Belfast community health initiative and registered as such on a community app. The friendly informal nature of the classes is preferred by many of the participants over a traditional gym environment because it also provides a social aspect.

During 2023, the Fitness Hub offered a variety of classes led by trained coaches including: Spin, Pilates, Kettlebells, Legs-Bums-Tums and Zumba. The fee structure was altered so that more people would be attracted, and this resulted in 144 classes with an average attendance of 10 in each class.

The church is also one of seven 'Take 5' centres in East Belfast seeking to deliver initiatives that enhance positive mental health. In partnership with East Belfast Community Development Association (EBCDA), the church focussed on addressing issues around men's mental health, with EBCDA speakers organising activities at the Men's Breakfast.

### **2.6.6 Practical Support**

During 2023, we brought to a close our community larder table. While this served as a valuable resource, we realised that it lacked the personal engagement necessary to truly connect with those who utilised it as it wasn't consistently manned. This limited our ability to offer a more holistic approach to supporting those in need.

As a positive outcome of this transition, the church is now partnered with both South Belfast and East Belfast foodbanks. We are a referring agency for the South Belfast Trussell Trust Foodbank, issuing food vouchers to individuals in need. This shift not only addresses the immediate concerns of food poverty but also aims to tackle the root causes of poverty in our community by connecting individuals with the comprehensive services they need

During our 2023 harvest service, the church collected food and household products to support the foodbanks and at Christmas, the church collected toys and vouchers on behalf on a local charity, Team Dot, for onward distribution to needy families.

### **2.6.7 Training & Development**

Development of our staff and volunteer team continued through on-the-job training and attendance at courses which included:

- IT and GDPR training
- Safeguarding training
- First aid training
- Food Hygiene training
- Fire Warden training
- Arrow leadership training

### **2.6.8 Acknowledgements**

The church are grateful to the following funders for their financial support for community/outreach activities during 2023:

- Arts Council Northern Ireland (Anthem Fund))
- The Halifax Foundation (Anthem Fund)
- Hinchley Charitable Trust (Outreach Fund – children/families work)

With the closure of the Anthem project in July 2023, the unspent grant of £664 was returned to the Arts Council Northern Ireland. In addition, a grant of £3,000 awarded by Hubbub Foundation UK (The Co-op) in 2022 was returned during 2023 as it was decided not to proceed with this project.

The church are also grateful to the parishioners for their ongoing financial support for both church and community outreach activities and local businesses and individuals who contributed to specific projects in 2023.

## **2.7 Social Media**

As a church, we believe it's essential to maintain a presence across all our social media platforms, as many people today rely on social media to connect and access information. We are very active on our Facebook and Instagram pages, keeping everyone informed about our ongoing activities.

We continue to upload sermons to our YouTube channel, allowing people to stay connected and giving those who missed Sunday services the chance to catch up later in the week. We are also able to offer live streaming of weddings and funerals, should that be requested by family members.

## **2.8 Facilities**

The church has continued to follow its Maintenance Plan, produced in 2017, to ensure routine and periodic tasks are completed at appropriate points in the year. This included professional inspection, servicing and testing of the gas boilers, lightning protection system, fire alarm system, fire extinguishers and the emergency lights.

During the year the rectory bathroom was refurbished completing the extensive upgrade work on the rectory commenced in 2021.

## **2.9 Safeguarding**

The Select Vestry has sought to mitigate any potential harm arising from its activities by adhering to the Church of Ireland's child protection policy, Safeguarding Trust, and the Church of Ireland's Adult Safeguarding policy, by taking out adequate insurance cover and by undertaking health and safety and fire risk assessments at regular intervals.

The church has the top Food Hygiene rating of five, awarded by Belfast City Council's Environmental Health Department.

## **2.10 Public Benefit**

The Parish has given careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit 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.

### 3. FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financial Reports are reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Select Vestry (Trustees) and also reviewed on completion of the Annual Accounts.

- Over the year ended 31 December 2023, total payments (£116,027) exceeded total receipts (£104,635) by £11,392 decreasing the total cash funds held from £45,194 (31 December 2022) to £33,802 (31 December 2023). The decrease can largely be attributed to the spend/return in 2023 of grants received in 2022 as outlined further below.
- The General Fund balance (unrestricted monies) decreased by £2,601 from £16,542 (31 December 2022) to £13,941 (31 December 2023). However, this was after 'one-off' spend of £7,288 on refurbishment work to the Rectory.
- The Anthem project ended in July 2023. Restricted / designated funds for Anthem / other music projects decreased by £9,611 from £12,110 (31 December 2022) to £2,499 (31 December 2023) as remaining grant amounts for the Anthem project were spent/returned.
- Restricted /designated funds for outreach projects decreased overall by £2,754 from £16,542 (31 December 2022) to £13,788 (31 December 2023). This is largely due to the return of a grant of £3,000.
- The Building Fund was reinstated in 2023 with the balance at year end of restricted/designated funds being £3,574. This is in anticipation of major work to address the heating situation commencing in 2025 (subject to sufficient funds being secured).
- In March 2021, the Select Vestry adopted a reserves policy which can be summarised as follows:

*The Select Vestry aims to achieve a position where free reserves in the general fund (the unrestricted fund) equate to approximately two months' normal general fund expenditure. The Select Vestry recognises that the Church has been operating with less than one month's reserves for many years and therefore a target of 4 years has been set to achieve this policy position.*

The free reserves in the general fund (the unrestricted fund) at 31 December 2023 were £13,941 which represents about 1.8 months normal general fund expenditure.

### 4. GOING CONCERN

The Trustees have reviewed the anticipated receipts and payments for the year ahead and are satisfied that the Church can continue its activities and that the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 can be signed off as a going concern.

## **5. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.1 Governing Document and Constitution**

Chapter 3 of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland governs parishes and parochial organisations. The Select Vestry are the Charity Trustees.

### **5.2 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, 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 selected as part of the General Vestry. The Select Vestry will hold their positions for a period of one year. Select Vestry members may be re-elected annually and there is no limit on the number of terms which may be served.

### **5.3 Pay and Remuneration**

The incumbent of the Parish is paid directly by the Parish and receives a stipend (salary) in accordance with the figures approved annually by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland. In addition, Locomotory Expenses Allowance, Pension Contributions and Office Allowance are paid at the approved rates issued by the Representative Church Body (R.C.B.) (see Note 4 to the Financial Statements).

Other staff are paid at rates linked to the National Joint Council (NJC) pay scales.

### **5.4 Organisational Structure**

The Select Vestry is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Parish. The Select Vestry consists of the incumbent serving in the Parish, the church wardens, the glebe wardens and generally not more than twelve other members of the General Vestry elected at the General Vestry Meeting/Easter Vestry.

The Select Vestry is chaired by the incumbent or other member of the clergy officiating in the Parish. 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 or the Diocesan Synod. Special meetings may be convened at any time by the chairperson or the church wardens. The Select Vestry met 6 times during 2023, with an average attendance of 80%.

## 5.5 Statement of Trustee's Responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the Statements of Receipts and Payments and 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 record 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 irregularities.

### Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

Sharon Braw

4.9.24



4.9.24

**BELFAST/Belfast:Mount Merrion/The Church of the Pentecost/ Down & Dromore / Church of Ireland**

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102093

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# Annual return

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# MOUNT MERRION PARISH CHURCH

## Independent Examiner's Report to the Charity Trustees of Mount Merrion Parish Church

I report on the Accounts of Mount Merrion Parish Church for the year ended 31 December 2023 which are set out on pages 15 to 20.

### Respective responsibilities of Charity Trustees and Examiner

As the Charity's Trustees you are responsible for the preparation of accounts in accordance with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts under section 65 of the Charities Act.
- Follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Commissioner under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act.
- State whether particular matters have come to my attention.

### Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

I have examined your charity accounts as required under section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charities Commission for Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act.

My examination included a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts with those records. It also included consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you the Charity Trustees concerning any such matters.

My role is to state whether any material matters have come to my attention giving me cause to believe:

1. That accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 63 of the Charities Act.
2. That the accounts do not accord with those accounting records.
3. That the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act.
4. That there is further information needed for proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

**Independent Examiner's Report (Cont'd).**

I have completed my examination and have no concerns in respect of the matters (1) to (4) listed on page 13 and, in connection with following Directions of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, I have found no matters that require drawing to your attention.

Signed: N Robinson

Ms Nicola Robinson ACA

31 Jellicoe Avenue

Belfast BT15 3GA

Date: 4/9/24