

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

ST DONARD'S PARISH CHURCH, BLOOMFIELD, BELFAST (NIC 102121)

c/o The Hon. Parochial Treasurer

Mr Michael Carson

32 Holland Gardens

BELFAST BT5 6EG

1 January 2023 until 31 December 2023

Trustees

The Venerable K Higgins (until 30th September 2023), Heather Boyd, Michael Carson, Kenneth Conlin, Caroline Fox, John Gilmore, Trevor Matthews, Nev McCormack, Nelson Morrow, William Moore, Rhonda Moroney, Graeme Smyth, Dianne Vaughan, Gareth Watson, Keith White, and Hilary Whiteside.

Finance

St Donard's successfully came through the difficulties of Covid-19, with 2023 being, overall, a sound financial year. Freewill envelope (and monthly standing orders) offerings, which fund the day to day running costs of St Donard's Parish were however significantly down in 2023 to £83,614 (2022: £92,596), reflecting the death of several much loved elderly and generous parishioners. Many of the younger parishioners have significant financial commitments at this stage of their lives and give as generously as they can. The £83,614 given in 2023 is below the average (£94,305) for the period 2012 to 2023, and the lowest since before 2012. There was a shift from envelopes to monthly standing orders from 2019 and this shift was been key in helping the Parish through the Covid-19 crisis and providing a level of financial certainty going forward. Those who continue to use FWO envelopes continued to give generously. FWO standing orders totalled £48,847 (2022: £51,037), exceeding the £34,767 (2022: £41,559) given using FWO envelopes. Donations to the running costs of the Church totalled £44,966, up from £13,464 in 2022. Of critical importance, £27,537 (2022: £18,320) of Gift Aid was recovered in 2023 from HMRC for freewill and other offerings (including Development Fund offerings). All Gift Aid was therefore recovered promptly for 2023 and was in line with expectations, subject to normal timing delays. In previous years, Gift Aid recovered was impacted by the timeliness of recovery, with a significant increase in 2019 (£32,215), compared to 2018 (£17,137) and 2017 (£19,037). The high figure of £32,215 in 2019 was due to the dedication of the new Gift Aid Secretary and the more timely recovery of gift aid. The Parish is now recovering Gift Aid on a timely and regular basis.

In 2023, a legacy totalling £135,036 were received by the Parish (2022: £1,830; 2021: £21,247; 2020: £97,920). This generous legacy was given to St Donard's by a lifelong and devoted parishioner, Enda Johnston. Legacy income can vary significantly each year. These significant legacies received over several years, will be used to fund new and ongoing initiatives within the Parish.

Parishioners have also been very generous with their ongoing financial commitment to the costs of the new Parish Centre – with £giving in 2023 (2022: £21,805 2021: £23,810; 2020: £26,330) by monthly standing orders and a further £1,855 (2021: £1,776) through the Envelope Scheme. Sadly, money received by standing order has fallen with the death of several highly committed elderly parishioners. Donations to the Development Fund of £1,400 were received in 2023 (2022: £1,400). Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, the highly successful car boot sale normally held from April to October, could not be run and is now unlikely to resume. In previous years, the willing band of volunteers who ran the car boot sale enthusiastically raised significant sums, with £12,824 raised in 2019 (2018: £14,094).

Normal Church expenditure, overall, is down by £3,821 compared to the previous financial year. Remuneration remains the most significant cost, £61,423 in 2023 (2022: £76,340). Remuneration includes the salary and locomotory allowance paid to the Rector; the Clergy Pension Fund contribution paid by the Parish to the Diocese; any payments made to other clergy; non-clergy superannuation costs; and the remuneration paid to the Church Organist. The decrease is largely a result of the Rector retiring at the end of September 2023. He will not be replaced until the middle of 2024. Other significant costs included the Parish's

contribution to the Diocesan General Fund £13,671 (2022: £11,154); and scheduled interest and principal repayments of £9,493 (2022: £18,986) on the bank loan used to finance the building of the new Parish Centre. As already noted, this loan was repaid in June 2023. These bank loan repayments were charged to the Development Fund. All other significant costs were broadly in line with 2022, although in 2023, our utility payments (gas, electricity and water) were significantly higher (2023: £10,367) than in 2022 (£6,517) and 2021 (£4,562). Fire safety works also increased from £2,057 in 2022 to £8,591 in 2023. . The Parish appointed a Family Worker in August 2021, with his remuneration £ (2022: £18,563) charged to the Development Fund. The Parish has agreed to part-fund the rent of a missionary family who returned to Northern Ireland and who are undertaking work for the Diocese and for this Parish. Our contribution, which is now £487 per month, commenced in October 2021 and this cost is met from the Development Fund. In 2023 this contribution was £5,850 (2022: £6,200). Note that in both 2022 and 2021 additional loan repayments (principal) of £50,000 were made from the Parish's Development Fund. The loan was fully repaid in June 2023 with a final additional loan repayment of £15,700. The costs incurred (between 2014 and 2018) in building the new Parish Centre totalled £957,814, with all but £361,535 of this being funded from investments; generous donations; and Parish income. Despite these significant costs, the Parish still contributed £15,868 (2022: £14,648) to other charities including, for example: £5,000 to CMS Ireland; £1,580 to Christian Aid; £1,500 to the Marie Curie Hospice; £1,473; and £1,001 to the Leprosy Mission.. During 2023, £1,326 was raised to support CMS Ireland in future years – the closing CMS Ireland balance at 31 December 2023 now stands at £5,737. This money is held in the St Donard's General Account.

During 2021, as a result of receiving significant legacies in 2021 and 2020, £136,000 was transferred from the General Fund to the Development Fund. This money has been used more generally by the Development Fund and since 2021 has helped the Parish fund a Family Worker, assist with the rent of a Missionary family (who are undertaking work for the Diocese and also this Parish), and repay an additional £115,700 (£15,700 in 2023; £50,000 in both 2021 and 2022) of the loan used to build the new Parish Centre.

As noted above, our loan was fully repaid in June 2023 (2022: £24,698; 2021: £91,663; 2020: £156,035; 2019: £165,943; 2018: £247,125; 2017: £296,143; 2016: £355,535). Our year end balances are as follows: General Bank account £256,933 (2022: £92,291) £33,770 in our Development Fund account (2022: £61,690); and £720 (2023: £553) in our Business Reserve account. In addition, the market value of our Parish Endowment Funds totalled ££53,096 (2022: £50,789). These Funds have risen due to better stock market conditions during 2023.

In 2023 our financial statements include the individual accounts of our Parent & Toddler Group.. The Parent & Toddler Group's income and expenditure was less than £1,000. The Women's Focus Group which ceased activities following Covid, transferred its remaining cash balances (£841) to St Donard's Church in 2023.

Looking forward to 2024, the financial position remains sound. However, the income (FWO – envelopes and Standing Orders) received from Parishioners will be kept under active review given the significant fall in 2023. Cash balances held in excess of our reserves policy and anticipated future routine expenditure, are now to improve our family outreach work and work with younger people. As noted above, our loan for the new Parish Centre has now been repaid. We will incur significant costs in bringing the Rectory up to standard for the new Rector to be appointed during 2024.

Management

The Finances are managed by the Treasurer who reports to the 16 Trustees at a Select Vestry meeting every two months, or more frequently if necessary. Select Vestry members are elected each year at the Easter General Vestry.

In September 2023, with heavy hearts, the Parish said farewell to our much loved and respected Rector, The Venerable Kenneth Higgins. The Rector was instrumental in leading St Donard's into a new era. The new Parish Centre would never have been built (and fully repaid before he left), without his leadership and vision. He was also key in building a Church attractive to young families and their children. As many of our

parishioners entered the final years of their lives, he provided them with exceptional pastoral support. We miss him, but now we now look forward to appointing a new Rector to our Parish.

Purpose

The principal function of St Donard's Parish, Bloomfield, is to support the advancement of the Christian religion by advancing the work of the Parish and the whole mission of the Church, which includes pastoral, social and ecumenical outreach. All the activities of the Parish relate to the promotion of religion through holding regular Worship Services; caring for parishioners of all ages, especially the sick and elderly; and also working with around 150 young people within our community. To enhance our outreach work to families and young people, the Parish appointed James Armstrong as a Family Worker in August 2021.

The Parish Church is a historically Listed Grade 2 building and the Parish works to maintain this building to a high standard.

Public Benefit

The Trustees of St Donard's Parish have complied with all their duties in line with the Commission's Public Benefit statutory guidance.

Regular worship and reaching out into the community, both to the elderly and the young, with very varied activities, on a social and fundraising level, have been carried out throughout the year to fulfil our Statement of Public Benefit.

The Parish has regular Food Bank collections to help the needy within our area. Money has been raised towards the work of the Christian Aid; Church Missionary Society Ireland; Crosslinks; Leprosy Mission; Overseas Missionary Fellowship; Samaritan's Purse (Shoebox Appeal) and South American Mission Society – all for the disadvantaged in various countries of the world. Some of the other charities supported by the Parish included, for example: the Bishops Appeal Christians Against Poverty, Church Ministry of Healing, Marie Curie Hospice, Air Ambulance and WaterAid. A total of £15,868 was donated to charities in 2023 (2022: £14,648).

Our Church premises and halls are used regularly by the community and in excess of 350 people would normally use the premises each week.

Michael Carson

Hon. Parochial Treasurer

18th **October 2023**

James Syth

Hon. Secretary to Select Vestry

18th **October 2023**