

NEWTOWNARDS/Comber/St. Mary/Down & Dromore/Church of Ireland

Northern Ireland · Charity number 102535

Details

Known as Comber Parish Church

Status Received

Registered 2015-05-15

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

Contact

Address St. Marys Church Of Ireland
The Square
Comber
Newtownards
County Down
BT23 5du
BT23 5DU

Phone 02891 873963

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Website www.comber.down.anglican.org

Activities

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	£209,587	£268,549	£0	3

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Mr David Peacock		
Mr Herbie Rogers		
Mr Ian Hunter		
Mr John Fitchie Msc Mrics		
Mr Mervyn Jess		
Mr Michael Lyttle		
Mr Peter Niblock		
Mr Wilfred Joseph Fisher		
Mrs Amanda Pearson		
Mrs Elaine Fyfe		
Mrs Elizabeth Rogers		
Mrs Lynn Jess		
Mrs Rosemary Cooper		
Mrs Susan Black		
Ms Inga Douglas		
Ms Victoria Cochrane		
Rev Sam Johnston		

NEWTOWNARDS/Comber/St. Mary/Down & Dromore/Church of Ireland

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102535

Accounts

Statement of Financial Activities

For the year ended 31 December 2025

	Note	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Prior year total funds
		£	£	£	2025	2024
		£	£	£	£	£
Income and endowments from:						
Donations and legacies	4	167,309	5,000	-	172,309	240,708
Income from charitable activities	5	23,329	0	-	23,329	15,511
Other trading activities	6	6,370	0	-	6,370	3,205
Investments	7	4,983	2,002	-	6,985	7,269
Other income	8	594	0	-	594	485
Total income		202,585	7,002	-	209,587	267,178
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds	9	7,521	-	-	7,521	6,379
Expenditure on charitable activities	10	259,470	-	-	259,470	191,155
Other expenditure	11	1,558	-	-	1,558	3,591
Total expenditure		268,549	-	-	268,549	201,125
Net income / (expenditure) resources before transfer		(65,964)	7,002	-	(58,962)	66,053
Transfers						
Transfers between funds	16	5,000	(5,000)	-	-	-
Net income / (expenditure) resources before other recognised gains and losses		(60,964)	2,002	-	(58,962)	66,053
Other recognised gains / losses						
Gains / (losses) on revaluation, fixed assets, charity's own use		-	2,610	556	3,166	3,461
Net movement in funds		(60,964)	4,612	556	(55,796)	69,514
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total funds brought forward	16	211,036	498,187	6,332	715,555	646,041
Total funds carried forward	16	150,072	502,799	6,888	659,759	715,555

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

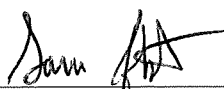
Balance sheet

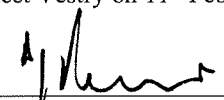
As at 31 December 2025

	Note	Total funds 2025	Prior year funds 2024
		£	£
Fixed assets			
Tangible fixed assets	14	404,610	404,610
Investments	15	78,110	74,944
		<u>482,720</u>	<u>479,554</u>
Current assets			
Cash at bank and in hand		232,533	294,311
		<u>232,533</u>	<u>294,311</u>
Liabilities			
Creditors: Amounts falling due in one year	17	7,910	4,932
		<u>7,910</u>	<u>4,932</u>
Net current assets less current liabilities		<u>224,623</u>	<u>289,379</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>707,343</u>	<u>768,933</u>
Liabilities			
Creditors: Amounts falling due after more than one year	17	47,584	53,378
		<u>47,584</u>	<u>53,378</u>
Total net assets less liabilities		<u>659,759</u>	<u>715,555</u>
Represented by Charity Funds:			
Endowment	16	6,888	6,332
Restricted	16	502,799	498,187
Unrestricted	16	150,072	211,036
Funds of the church		<u>659,759</u>	<u>715,555</u>

The notes on pages 11 to 20 are an integral part of these financial statements.

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Select Vestry on 11th February 2026.


Reverend Sam Johnston,
Rector


David Peacock
Honorary Treasurer

Notes to the financial statements

Year ended 31 December 2025

1. General information

St Mary's Parish Church, Comber registered as a charity with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland on 15 May 2024 (under the name 'Newtownards/Comber/St. Mary/Down & Dromore/Church of Ireland'). Its principal place of business is The Square, Comber, Newtownards, County Down, BT23 5DU. The nature of the charity's operations and principal activities are the advancement of religion.

2. Accounting Policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation or uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

a. Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared under the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 in accordance with the Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s). The financial statements are presented in sterling which is the functional currency of the charity and rounded to the nearest £1.

b. Basis of financial statements

The accounts have been prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis, which recognises transactions and events only when cash is received or paid.

c. Preparation of the accounts on a going concern basis

The Select Vestry, as the Trustee body of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber, has reviewed cashflow forecasts for the coming year and are satisfied that the Parish has resources to provide a reasonable expectation that it can continue to meet its financial obligations as they fall due for the foreseeable future. Accordingly, these financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis.

d. Legacies

Legacies are included within Income under either unrestricted or restricted funds according to the terms under which the donation is made and when the amount has been received.

e. Tangible Fixed Assets

The tangible fixed assets of the Parish, retained for its own use, comprise:

- Church Building and Graveyard
- Parochial Hall
- Youth Hall
- Glebe Cottage
- Rectory

The Church Building and Graveyard are deemed to be Heritage assets as defined by the Charities SORP (FRS 102). These heritage assets are not included on the balance sheet as information on the cost or valuation is not available and

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2025

such information cannot be obtained at a cost commensurate with the benefit to the users of the accounts and to the parish.

The parochial hall, youth hall and Glebe Cottage were built prior to 1970. There are no reliable records of the cost of this construction and, as integral to the Church building and grounds, a valuation approach lacks sufficient reliability. As a result, these buildings are not recognised in the parish balance sheet. (Insurance values reconstruction at £2.52m (2024: £2.52m)).

The rectory is recognised at its original cost of acquisition.

f. Fixed Asset Investments

Fixed asset investments comprise holdings in endowment and restricted funds bequeathed to the Parish, where the underlying assets comprise listed unit trusts and equity shares. These are stated at fair value at each year end date.

g. Financial Instruments

The Parish only holds financial assets and financial liabilities that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement amount.

h. Fund Structure

Funds are classified as either restricted funds, endowment funds or unrestricted funds. These classifications are defined as follows:

- (i) Restricted funds are subject to specific requirements as to their use which may be declared by the donor or with their authority, or created through legal processes, but still within the wider objects of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber.
- (ii) Endowment funds are funds which have been given on the condition that the original capital sum is not reduced, but the income therefrom is used for the purpose defined in accordance with the objects of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber.
- (iii) Unrestricted funds are expendable at the discretion of the Select Vestry in furtherance of the objects of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber. If parts of the unrestricted funds are earmarked at the discretion of the Select Vestry for a particular purpose, they are designated as a separate fund. This designation has an administrative purpose only and does not legally restrict the Select Vestry's discretion to apply the fund.

3. Critical accounting judgements and estimation uncertainty

Estimates and judgments made in the process of preparing the financial statements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. The Select Vestry do not consider that there are any critical judgments made in applying the Parish's accounting policies or that there are any critical accounting estimates or assumptions which may have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year.

St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber
Charity Number: NIC 102535

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2025

Analysis of income

4. Donations and legacies

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Weekly envelopes / FWO & collections	116,395	-	-	116,395	114,744
Donations	5,231	-	-	5,231	86,128
Legacies	6,000	-	-	6,000	10,000
Gift Aid Tax recovered	39,683	-	-	39,683	29,836
General grants provided by other charities		5,000	-	5,000	-
	<u>167,309</u>	<u>5,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>172,309</u>	<u>240,708</u>

5. Charitable activities

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Fundraising	12,691	-	-	12,691	10,296
Subscriptions	-	-	-	-	-
Church hall lettings - charitable object	9,638	-	-	9,638	4,965
Graveyard income	1,000	-	-	1,000	250
	<u>23,329</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>23,329</u>	<u>15,511</u>

6. Other trading activities

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Rent from land or buildings	2,095	-	-	2,095	2,105
Catering	4,275	-	-	4,275	1,100
	<u>6,370</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>6,370</u>	<u>3,205</u>

7. Investment income

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Bank interest	4,080	686	-	4,766	4,704
Dividends	903	1,316	-	2,219	2,565
	<u>4,983</u>	<u>2,002</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>6,985</u>	<u>7,269</u>

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2025

8. Other income

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Other	594	-	-	594	485
	<u>594</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>594</u>	<u>485</u>

Analysis of expenditure

9. Raising funds

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Interest charge on loan	2,941	-	-	2,941	3,733
Fund raising costs	4,580	-	-	4,580	2,646
	<u>7,521</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>7,521</u>	<u>6,379</u>

10. Charitable activities

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Wages and salaries	95,537	-	-	95,537	90,111
Diocesan assessment	15,099	-	-	15,099	15,461
Organist fee	8,325	-	-	8,325	7,875
Repairs & maintenance - General	16,493	-	-	16,493	3,698
Repairs & maintenance – Renovation works	19 90,468	-	-	90,468	32,502
Rates & water charges	2,024	-	-	2,024	1,781
Heat, light & power	9,991	-	-	9,991	9,847
Telephone, broadband and IT software	1,929	-	-	1,929	2,180
Insurance	5,070	-	-	5,070	4,918
Health and safety costs	4,808	-	-	4,808	2,719
Car Park security keys	1,146	-	-	1,146	-
Professional fees – Renovation Works	19 2,880	-	-	2,880	14,238
Charitable donations	18 3,095	-	-	3,095	2,124
Printing, postage and stationery	238	-	-	238	636
Upkeep of grounds and graveyard	628	-	-	628	639
Office & Other equipment	217	-	-	217	752
Other expenses	1,522	-	-	1,522	1,674
	<u>259,470</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>259,470</u>	<u>191,155</u>

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2025

11. Other costs

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Bank fees and charges	380	-	-	380	406
Equipment repairs & renewals	-	-	-	-	1,959
Independent examiner's report	300	-	-	300	300
Payroll administration services	468	-	-	468	708
Sundry expenses	410	-	-	410	218
	<u>1,558</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,558</u>	<u>3,591</u>

12. Analysis of staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses, and the cost of key management personnel

Employees

	Total 2025	Total 2024
	£	£
Clergy Stipend and Allowances	48,224	47,499
Clergy pension contributions	5,970	5,853
Staff salaries	36,079	34,317
Lay salaries – pastoral support services	2,262	-
Staff pension contributions	200	175
Sexton office allowance	200	300
Visiting & relief clergy	760	518
Social security costs	1,842	1,449
	<u>95,537</u>	<u>90,111</u>

The average number of employees during the year, calculated on the basis of a head count, was as follows:

	2025	2024
Ministerial staff	1	1
Administration	2	2
	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>

There are no employees in receipt of benefits in excess of £60,000.

13. Key Management and Trustees

Key management are deemed to comprise the Trustees and who represent the Select Vestry. No trustee or a person related to a trustee had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by St Mary's Parish Church, Comber, during the year.

St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber
Charity Number: NIC 102535

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2025

The Reverend Sam Johnston received the following remuneration as approved by the General Synod and implemented by the Select Vestry of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber:

	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Stipend	40,444	39,651
Locomotor expenses	7,000	7,000
Expenses allowance	800	800
Pension contribution (including insured death in service benefit)	5,970	5,853

The parish did not pay any expenses relating to the running costs of the Rectory occupied by the Rector.

14. Tangible Fixed Assets

	Land & Buildings £	Total £
Cost		
At 1 January 2025	404,610	404,610
Additions	-	-
Disposals	-	-
At 31 December 2025	<u>404,610</u>	<u>404,610</u>

15. Fixed Asset Investments

Details	Fund to which the asset belongs	Current value 2025 £	Current value 2024 £
Units held in the Northern Ireland Central Investment Fund for Charities (managed fund)	Investment	6,888	6,332
Investment portfolio (managed fund)	Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust	<u>71,222</u>	<u>68,612</u>
		<u>78,110</u>	<u>74,944</u>

The Department for Communities hold units in the Northern Ireland Central Investment Fund for Charities as trustee for four, historic, donations/bequests under which dividends thereon are paid to St Mary's Parish Church for disbursement by Select Vestry to local charitable causes. St Mary's Parish Church is not entitled to seek the capital from these donations/bequests.

The investment portfolio represents the capital account of the Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust and comprises holdings in listed bonds and equities that are managed by an independent specialist service provider. St Mary's Parish Church is entitled to seek the capital from this bequest, in accordance with the objectives of the Trust Deed.

St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber
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Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2025

16. Funds of the Parish

	At 1 Jan 2025	Incoming resources	Outgoing resources	Transfers	Gains and Losses	At 31 Dec 2025
	£	£	£	£	£	£
<u>Endowment funds</u>						
Investment fund	6,332	-	-	-	556	6,888
	<u>6,332</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>556</u>	<u>6,888</u>
<u>Restricted funds</u>						
<i>Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust Fund - capital</i>	68,612	-	-	-	2,610	71,222
<i>Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust Fund - income</i>	10,781	1,806	-	-	-	12,587
Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust Fund	79,393	1,806	-	-	2,610	83,809
Development Fund	-	5,000	-	(5,000)	-	-
Mona Grey Legacy Fund	13,911	192	-	-	-	14,103
Rectory Fund	404,610	-	-	-	-	404,610
Youth Fund	273	4	-	-	-	277
	<u>498,187</u>	<u>7,002</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(5,000)</u>	<u>2,610</u>	<u>502,799</u>
<u>Unrestricted funds</u>						
General Fund	72,723	159,393	(170,922)	15,444	-	76,638
Designated funds:						
Development Fund	136,911	41,646	(94,465)	(11,845)	-	72,247
Charities Fund	1,147	1,546	(3,132)	1,401	-	962
Rector's Discretionary Fund	255	-	(30)	-	-	225
	<u>211,036</u>	<u>202,585</u>	<u>(268,549)</u>	<u>5,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>150,072</u>
Total funds	<u>715,555</u>	<u>209,587</u>	<u>(268,549)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,166</u>	<u>659,759</u>

Purpose of restricted funds

Mona Grey Legacy Fund	For the benefit of the youth in the Church and to promote youth work, through worship
Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust Fund	To further the ministry in the parish
Rectory Fund	To fund the purchase of a new rectory
Youth Fund	For youth related projects in the Parish

Purpose of unrestricted, including designated, funds

General Fund	For the day to day running of the Church
Development Fund	For any major renovation or repairs necessary for the upkeep of the Church and property
Charities Fund	For the segregation of charity collections pending disbursement to the relevant charitable body
Rector's Discretionary Fund	The Rector's discretionary fund (previously known as the Parish Emergency Fund) is available to provide support / immediate help to parishioners

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2025

17. Creditors

	2025	2024
	£	£
Amounts falling due in one year:		
Refundable deposits for security keys issued to access the church's private car parking facilities	2,450	-
Bank loan (note)	<u>5,460</u>	<u>4,932</u>
	7,910	4,932
Amounts falling due after more than one year:		
Bank loan (note)	<u>47,584</u>	<u>53,378</u>
	<u><u>55,494</u></u>	<u><u>58,310</u></u>

On 19 November 2008 St Mary's Parish Church, Comber raised a bank loan of £250,000 to part fund the major building works comprising the South Transept. Repayments commenced on 31 December 2008 and will continue until 30 November 2033. The loan is unsecured and carries interest at 1% over base rate.

The bank loan is recorded within the parish's Development Fund.

18. Collections for Third Parties

	2025	2024
	£	£
'Our Daily Bread' Ministry	274	-
Leprosy Mission	373	694
The NET, Comber	560	489
St John's Ambulance	-	180
McDermott Cancer Unit, Ulster Hospital	-	311
Royal British Legion	240	-
Bishop's Appeal (Maridi)	1,400	450
Bishop's Ministry Fund	248	-

The collections for third parties were lodged to the Charities Fund and disbursed on approval by the Select Vestry.

St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber
Charity Number: NIC 102535

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2025

19. Renovation Works

The following expenditure has been incurred to date on Renovation Works for the Bell Tower repair scheme, including architectural and other professional services:

	2025	2024	2023
Nature of the expenditure incurred:	£	£	£
Professional fees:			
• Specialist architectural services:			
- Condition Report for the Bell Tower			5,622
- Listed Building Consent from the Historic Environment Division for the repair scheme to the Bell Tower			900
- Technical specification document for the Bell Tower repair scheme and tender process		12,758	-
- Site visits, inspections, and certification that the standard of remedial work meets the Specification for Repairs	2,880	-	-
• Contract documentation (JCT Minor Works) for the Bell Tower repair scheme		400	-
• Technical support on grant application work		1,080	2,520
	<u>2,880</u>	<u>14,238</u>	<u>9,042</u>
Repair Scheme Labour & Materials:			
• Erection of safety netting around the Bell Tower		2,976	-
• Labour & materials	66,320	13,707	-
• Refurbishment of the louvre windows	1,600	814	-
• Fencing and barriers around work site	2,175	167	-
• Erection and maintenance of scaffolding	7,260	14,400	-
• Restoration of Clock face & hands	3,870		-
• Lead work to Cornice	5,460		-
• Lightning protection	3,293		-
• Secondary Bell Support	95		-
• Refurbish circular window frame	395		-
• Electrical safety work		215	-
• Health & Safety signage		223	-
	<u>90,468</u>	<u>32,502</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>93,348</u>	<u>46,740</u>	<u>9,042</u>
Funded by:			
• Benefact Trust grant award	-	4,250	-
• National Churches Trust grant award	5,000	-	-
• Own resources (from donations and fundraising initiatives)	88,348	42,490	9,042
	<u>93,348</u>	<u>46,740</u>	<u>9,042</u>

The claim against the Representative Church Body's 'Fabric & Development Fund' award of a grant towards the costs of the Repair Scheme will be made on completion of the project in 2026.

St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber
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Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2025

20. Taxation

St Mary's Parish Church, Comber is recognised as a charity for the purposes of applicable taxation legislation and is therefore not subject to taxation on its charitable activities.

21. Retirement benefit schemes

St Mary's Parish Church, Comber operates a defined contribution scheme, the Church of Ireland Clergy Pension Fund, for the Rector and other qualifying staff are enrolled into the government's National Employment Savings Trust (NEST) workplace pension scheme. The assets of the schemes are held separately from those of the parish in independently administered funds.

NEWTOWNARDS/Comber/St. Mary/Down & Dromore/Church of Ireland

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102535

Accounts

Statement of Financial Activities

For the year ended 31 December 2024

	Note	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Prior year total funds
		£	£	£	£	£
					2024	2023
Income and endowments from:						
Donations and legacies	4	240,708	-	-	240,708	149,825
Income from charitable activities	5	15,511	-	-	15,511	13,313
Other trading activities	6	3,205	-	-	3,205	3,395
Investments	7	4,834	2,435	-	7,269	4,510
Other income	8	485	-	-	485	3,467
Total income		264,743	2,435	-	267,178	174,510
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds	9	6,379	-	-	6,379	7,519
Expenditure on charitable activities	10	191,155	-	-	191,155	162,163
Other expenditure	11	3,572	19	-	3,591	1,560
Total expenditure		201,106	19	-	201,125	171,242
Net income / (expenditure) resources before transfer		63,637	2,416	-	66,053	3,268
Transfers						
Transfers between funds	16	8,577	(8,577)	-	-	-
Net income / (expenditure) resources before other recognised gains and losses		72,214	(6,161)	-	66,053	3,268
Other recognised gains / losses						
Gains / (losses) on revaluation, fixed assets, charity's own use		-	3,252	209	3,461	1,926
Net movement in funds		72,214	(2,909)	209	69,514	5,194
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total funds brought forward	16	138,822	501,096	6,123	646,041	640,847
Total funds carried forward	16	211,036	498,187	6,332	715,555	646,041

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

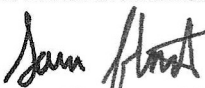
Balance sheet

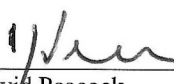
As at 31 December 2024

	Note	Total funds	Prior year funds
		2024	2023
		£	£
Fixed assets			
Tangible fixed assets	14	404,610	404,610
Investments	15	74,944	71,483
		479,554	476,093
Current assets			
Cash at bank and in hand		294,311	233,736
		294,311	233,736
Liabilities			
Creditors: Amounts falling due in one year	17	4,932	5,002
		4,932	5,002
Net current assets less current liabilities		289,379	228,734
Total assets less current liabilities		768,933	704,827
Liabilities			
Creditors: Amounts falling due after more than one year	17	53,378	58,786
		53,378	58,786
Total net assets less liabilities		715,555	646,041
Represented by Charity Funds:			
Endowment	16	6,332	6,123
Restricted	16	498,187	501,096
Unrestricted	16	211,036	138,822
Funds of the church		715,555	646,041

The notes on pages 11 to 19 are an integral part of these financial statements.

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Select Vestry on 12 March 2025.


Reverend Sam Johnston,
Rector


David Peacock
Honorary Treasurer

Notes to the financial statements

Year ended 31 December 2024

1. General information

St Mary's Parish Church, Comber registered as a charity with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland on 15 May 2023 (under the name 'Newtownards/Comber/St. Mary/Down & Dromore/Church of Ireland'). Its principal place of business is The Square, Comber, Newtownards, County Down, BT23 5DU. The nature of the charity's operations and principal activities are the advancement of religion.

2. Accounting Policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation or uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

a. Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared under the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 in accordance with the Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s). The financial statements are presented in sterling which is the functional currency of the charity and rounded to the nearest £1.

b. Basis of financial statements

The accounts have been prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis, which recognises transactions and events only when cash is received or paid.

c. Preparation of the accounts on a going concern basis

The Select Vestry, as the Trustee body of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber, has reviewed cashflow forecasts for the coming year and are satisfied that the Parish has resources to provide a reasonable expectation that it can continue to meet its financial obligations as they fall due for the foreseeable future. Accordingly, these financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis.

d. Legacies

Legacies are included within Income under either unrestricted or restricted funds according to the terms under which the donation is made and when the amount has been received.

e. Tangible Fixed Assets

The tangible fixed assets of the Parish, retained for its own use, comprise:

- Church Building and Graveyard
- Parochial Hall
- Youth Hall
- Glebe Cottage
- Rectory

The Church Building and Graveyard are deemed to be Heritage assets as defined by the Charities SORP (FRS 102). These heritage assets are not included on the balance sheet as information on the cost or valuation is not available and

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2024

such information cannot be obtained at a cost commensurate with the benefit to the users of the accounts and to the parish.

The parochial hall, youth hall and Glebe Cottage were built prior to 1970. There are no reliable records of the cost of this construction and, as integral to the Church building and grounds, a valuation approach lacks sufficient reliability. As a result, these buildings are not recognised in the parish balance sheet. (Insurance values reconstruction at £2.52m (2023: £2.40m)).

The rectory is recognised at its original cost of acquisition.

f. Fixed Asset Investments

Fixed asset investments comprise holdings in endowment and restricted funds bequeathed to the Parish, where the underlying assets comprise listed unit trusts and equity shares. These are stated at fair value at each year end date.

g. Financial Instruments

The Parish only holds financial assets and financial liabilities that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement amount.

h. Fund Structure

Funds are classified as either restricted funds, endowment funds or unrestricted funds. These classifications are defined as follows:

- (i) Restricted funds are subject to specific requirements as to their use which may be declared by the donor or with their authority, or created through legal processes, but still within the wider objects of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber.
- (ii) Endowment funds are funds which have been given on the condition that the original capital sum is not reduced, but the income therefrom is used for the purpose defined in accordance with the objects of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber.
- (iii) Unrestricted funds are expendable at the discretion of the Select Vestry in furtherance of the objects of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber. If parts of the unrestricted funds are earmarked at the discretion of the Select Vestry for a particular purpose, they are designated as a separate fund. This designation has an administrative purpose only and does not legally restrict the Select Vestry's discretion to apply the fund.

3. Critical accounting judgements and estimation uncertainty

Estimates and judgments made in the process of preparing the financial statements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. The Select Vestry do not consider that there are any critical judgments made in applying the Parish's accounting policies or that there are any critical accounting estimates or assumptions which may have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year.

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2024

Analysis of income

4. Donations and legacies

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
	£	£	£	£	£
Weekly envelopes / FWO & collections	114,744	-	-	114,744	105,734
Donations	86,128	-	-	86,128	5,707
Legacies	10,000	-	-	10,000	-
Gift Aid Tax recovered	29,836	-	-	29,836	34,134
General grants provided by other charities (as a contribution towards the costs of the Bell Tower repair scheme)	-	-	-	-	4,250
	<u>240,708</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>240,708</u>	<u>149,825</u>

5. Charitable activities

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
	£	£	£	£	£
Fundraising	10,296	-	-	10,296	5,750
Subscriptions	-	-	-	-	-
Church hall lettings - charitable object	4,965	-	-	4,965	7,063
Graveyard income	250	-	-	250	500
	<u>15,511</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>15,511</u>	<u>13,313</u>

6. Other trading activities

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
	£	£	£	£	£
Rent from land or buildings	2,105	-	-	2,105	1,565
Catering	1,100	-	-	1,100	1,830
	<u>3,205</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,205</u>	<u>3,395</u>

7. Investment income

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
	£	£	£	£	£
Bank interest	3,984	720	-	4,704	1,992
Dividends	850	1,715	-	2,565	2,518
	<u>4,834</u>	<u>2,435</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>7,269</u>	<u>4,510</u>

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2024

8. Other income

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
	£	£	£	£	£
Energy bills relief scheme	-	-	-	-	2,399
Other	485	-	-	485	1,068
	<u>485</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>485</u>	<u>3,467</u>

Analysis of expenditure

9. Raising funds

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
	£	£	£	£	£
Interest charge on loan	3,733	-	-	3,733	3,711
Fund raising costs	2,646	-	-	2,646	3,808
	<u>6,379</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>6,379</u>	<u>7,519</u>

10. Charitable activities

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
	£	£	£	£	£
Wages and salaries	90,111	-	-	90,111	84,925
Diocesan assessment	15,461	-	-	15,461	16,527
Organist fee	7,875	-	-	7,875	8,325
Repairs & maintenance - General	3,698	-	-	3,698	3,003
Repairs & maintenance – Renovation works	19 32,502	-	-	32,502	-
Rates & water charges	1,781	-	-	1,781	401
Heat, light & power	9,847	-	-	9,847	15,183
Telephone, broadband and IT software	2,180	-	-	2,180	1,623
Insurance	4,918	-	-	4,918	4,688
Health and safety costs	2,719	-	-	2,719	4,239
Professional fees – Renovation Works	19 14,238	-	-	14,238	9,042
Charitable donations	2,124	-	-	2,124	2,571
Printing, postage and stationery	636	-	-	636	209
Upkeep of grounds and graveyard	639	-	-	639	5,462
Office & Other equipment	752	-	-	752	3,942
Other expenses	1,674	-	-	1,674	2,023
	<u>191,155</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>191,155</u>	<u>162,163</u>

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2024

11. Other costs

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
	£	£	£	£	£
Bank fees and charges	387	19	-	406	368
Equipment repairs & renewals	1,959	-	-	1,959	338
Independent examiner's report	300	-	-	300	300
Payroll administration services	708	-	-	708	480
Sundry expenses	218	-	-	218	74
	<u>3,572</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,591</u>	<u>1,560</u>

12. Analysis of staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses, and the cost of key management personnel

Employees

	Total 2024	Total 2023
	£	£
Clergy Stipend and Allowances	47,499	45,136
Clergy pension contributions	5,853	3,390
Staff salaries	34,317	34,439
Staff pension contributions	175	-
Sexton office allowance	300	500
Visiting & relief clergy	518	385
Social security costs	<u>1,449</u>	<u>1,075</u>
	<u>90,111</u>	<u>84,925</u>

The average number of employees during the year, calculated on the basis of a head count, was as follows:

	2024	2023
Ministerial staff	1	1
Administration	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>

There are no employees in receipt of benefits in excess of £60,000.

13. Key Management and Trustees

Key management are deemed to comprise the Trustees and who represent the Select Vestry. No trustee or a person related to a trustee had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by St Mary's Parish Church, Comber, during the year.

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2024

The Reverend Sam Johnston received the following remuneration as approved by the General Synod and implemented by the Select Vestry of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber:

	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Stipend	39,651	37,428
Locomotory expenses	7,000	7,000
Expenses allowance	800	800
Pension contribution (including insured death in service benefit)	5,853	3,390

The parish did not pay any expenses relating to the running costs of the Rectory occupied by the Rector.

14. Tangible Fixed Assets

	Land & Buildings £	Total £
Cost		
At 1 January 2024	404,610	404,610
Additions	-	-
Disposals	-	-
At 31 December 2024	<u>404,610</u>	<u>404,610</u>

15. Fixed Asset Investments

Details	Fund to which the asset belongs	Current value 2024 £	Current value 2023 £
Units held in the Northern Ireland Central Investment Fund for Charities (managed fund)	Investment	6,332	6,123
Investment portfolio (managed fund)	Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust	<u>68,612</u>	<u>65,360</u>
		<u>74,944</u>	<u>71,483</u>

The Department for Communities hold units in the Northern Ireland Central Investment Fund for Charities as trustee for four, historic, donations/bequests under which dividends thereon are paid to St Mary's Parish Church for disbursement by Select Vestry to local charitable causes. St Mary's Parish Church is not entitled to seek the capital from these donations/bequests.

The investment portfolio represents the capital account of the Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust and comprises holdings in listed bonds and equities that are managed by an independent specialist service provider. St Mary's Parish Church is entitled to seek the capital from this bequest, in accordance with the objectives of the Trust Deed.

St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber
Charity Number: NIC 102535

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2024

16. Funds of the Parish

	At 1 Jan 2024 £	Incoming resources £	Outgoing resources £	Transfers £	Gains and Losses £	At 31 Dec 2024 £
<u>Endowment funds</u>						
Investment fund	6,123	-	-	-	209	6,332
	<u>6,123</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>209</u>	<u>6,332</u>
<u>Restricted funds</u>						
<i>Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust Fund - capital</i>	65,360	-	-	-	3,252	68,612
<i>Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust Fund - income</i>	8,941	2,168	(19)	(309)	-	10,781
Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust Fund	74,301	2,168	(19)	(309)	3,252	79,393
Development Fund	4,250			(4,250)		-
Mona Grey Legacy Fund	13,683	228	-	-	-	13,911
Rectory Fund	404,610	-	-	-	-	404,610
Youth Fund	4,252	39	-	(4,018)	-	273
	<u>501,096</u>	<u>2,435</u>	<u>(19)</u>	<u>(8,577)</u>	<u>3,252</u>	<u>498,187</u>
<u>Unrestricted funds</u>						
General Fund	65,617	152,673	(148,567)	3,000	-	72,723
Designated funds:						
Development Fund	71,522	111,377	(50,532)	4,544	-	136,911
Charities Fund	1,420	693	(1,976)	1,010	-	1,147
Rector's Discretionary Fund	263	-	(31)	23	-	255
	<u>138,822</u>	<u>264,743</u>	<u>(201,106)</u>	<u>8,577</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>211,036</u>
Total funds	<u>646,041</u>	<u>267,178</u>	<u>(201,125)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,461</u>	<u>715,555</u>

Purpose of restricted funds

Mona Grey Legacy Fund	For the benefit of the youth in the Church and to promote youth work, through worship
Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust Fund	To further the ministry in the parish
Rectory Fund	To fund the purchase of a new rectory
Youth Fund	For youth related projects in the Parish

Purpose of unrestricted, including designated, funds

General Fund	For the day to day running of the Church
Development Fund	For any major renovation or repairs necessary for the upkeep of the Church and property
Charities Fund	For the segregation of charity collections pending disbursement to the relevant charitable body
Rector's Discretionary Fund	The Rector's discretionary fund (previously known as the Parish Emergency Fund) is available to provide support / immediate help to parishioners

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2024

17. Creditors

	2024	2023
	£	£
Bank loan: Amounts falling due in one year	4,932	5,002
Amounts falling due after more than one year	<u>53,378</u>	<u>58,786</u>
	<u>58,310</u>	<u>63,788</u>

On 19 November 2008 St Mary's Parish Church, Comber raised a bank loan of £250,000 to part fund the major building works comprising the South Transept. Repayments commenced on 31 December 2008 and will continue until 30 November 2033. The loan is unsecured and carries interest at 1% over base rate.

The bank loan is recorded within the parish's Development Fund.

18. Collections for Third Parties

	2024	2023
	£	£
Leprosy Mission	694	930
The NET, Comber	489	-
St John's Ambulance	180	-
McDermott Cancer Unit, Ulster Hospital	311	-
Bishop's Appeal (Maridi)	450	-
Newtownards Foodbank	-	332
Royal British Legion	-	326
Macmillan Cancer Support	-	332
Alzheimer's Society in Northern Ireland	-	651

The collections for third parties were lodged to the Charities Fund and disbursed on approval by the Select Vestry.

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2024

19. Renovation Works

The following expenditure has been incurred to date on Renovation Works for the Bell Tower repair scheme, including architectural and other professional services:

Nature of the expenditure incurred:	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Professional fees:		
• Specialist architectural services:		
- Condition Report for the Bell Tower	-	5,622
- Listed Building Consent from the Historic Environment Division for the repair scheme to the Bell Tower	-	900
- Technical specification document for the Bell Tower repair scheme and tender process	12,758	-
• Technical support on grant application work	1,080	2,520
• Contract documentation (JCT Minor Works) for the Bell Tower repair scheme	400	-
	<u>14,238</u>	<u>9,042</u>
Repair Scheme Labour & Materials:		
• Erection of safety netting around the Bell Tower	2,976	-
• Stone materials, dressing and painting	13,707	-
• Refurbishment of the louvre windows	814	-
• Fencing and barriers around work site	167	-
• Erection and maintenance of scaffolding	14,400	-
• Electrical safety work	215	-
• Health & Safety signage	223	-
	<u>32,502</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>46,740</u>	<u>9,042</u>
Funded by:		
• Benefact Trust grant award	4,250	-
• Own resources	42,490	9,042
	<u>46,740</u>	<u>9,042</u>

20. Taxation

St Mary's Parish Church, Comber is recognised as a charity for the purposes of applicable taxation legislation and is therefore not subject to taxation on its charitable activities.

21. Retirement benefit schemes

St Mary's Parish Church, Comber operates a defined contribution scheme, the Church of Ireland Clergy Pension Fund, for the Rector and other qualifying staff are enrolled into the government's National Employment Savings Trust (NEST) workplace pension scheme. The assets of the schemes are held separately from those of the parish in an independently administered fund.

NEWTOWNARDS/Comber/St. Mary/Down & Dromore/Church of Ireland

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102535

Annual report



St Mary's Parish Church, Comber
Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements
For the Year ending 31 December 2024

Trustees' annual report and financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2024

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St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber
Charity Number: NIC 102535

Administrative Details

Charity name: St Mary's Parish Church
Charity registration number: NIC 102535
Address: Church Office, 24 The Square, Comber, BT23 5DU

Trustees:

Mr John Fitchie
Mr David Buchanan
Mr Wilfred Fisher
Mr Herbie Rogers
Mr Steven Sewell
Mrs Elizabeth Rogers
Rev Sam Johnston
Mr Mervyn Jess
Mr David Peacock
Mr Ian Hunter
Mrs Lynn Jess
Mr Peter Niblock From 10 April 2024
Mrs Elaine Fyfe From 16 May 2024
Ms Donna Curry Until 6 June 2024
Mr Samuel Curry Until 8 May 2024
Mr Sui-Wing Mo Until 10 April 2024
Mrs Irene Waterson Until 10 April 2024
Mrs Anne Hodge Until 10 April 2024
Mr Desmond Mackey Until 10 April 2024

Principal Office-Bearers

Clergy: Reverend Sam Johnston
Sexton: Joe McIver
Honorary Treasurer: David Peacock
Honorary Secretary: Wilfie Fisher
Church Warden – Rector's: Herbie Rogers
Church Warden – People's: Elaine Fyfe
Glebe Warden – Rector's: John Fitchie
Glebe Warden – People's: Herbie Rogers

Independent Examiner

David J. Bennett
9 Londonderry Avenue
Comber
BT23 4DE

Bankers

Danske Bank
Belfast Business Centre
P.O. Box 183
Donegall Square West
Belfast BT1 6JS

St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber
Charity Number: NIC 102535

Report of the trustees

The trustees present the annual report and accounts for St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber for the year ended 31 December 2024.

Objectives And Activities

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

The principal function of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber ("St. Mary's") is to support the advancement of the Christian religion by promoting, through the work of Comber 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, St. Mary's has custody of property and of records, materials and artefacts of significance to the cultural and religious heritage and maintenance of which is undertaken by the Select Vestry of St. Mary's.

Achievement, Performance and Public Benefit

The Trustees believe that St Mary's has succeeded in its charitable purpose in the following ways.

Advancement Of Religion – Our Worship

The Parish of Comber has one church dedicated to St. Mary. Founded in AD 1200 as a Cistercian Abbey, Christian worship has continued here ever since. When the Abbey was suppressed by Henry VIII in the mid-16th Century, the Christian presence continued with a planter church in the reformed Anglican tradition known in Ireland as the Church of Ireland. The dedication to St. Mary remained.

Throughout a typical year, there is public worship each Sunday in St. Mary's. Holy Communion is celebrated at 9:00 am and a main morning service at 11:00am, together with a service of Holy Communion each Wednesday morning at 10:00 am. A family Holy Communion is also celebrated on the first Sunday of each month at the main morning service. The provision of online services has continued to supplement in-person services. Special services at Easter and Christmas drew large numbers of attendees from the wider community.

Throughout the year St. Mary's sought to provide a pastoral presence through its ministry team. Members of the community admitted to hospital or suffering bereavements contact the church and their spiritual needs are addressed. Whether or not they are active members of the parish, we have sought to help people in their need.

The Rector, the Rev. Sam Johnston, continued in his appointment as the person with pastoral responsibility for the parish. He, along with the other clergy and readers, provided the leadership in worship. Trustee meetings were chaired by the Rev. Johnston.

Property Use

The church's halls were available and used regularly throughout the year by both members and non-members of the parish, including a Parent and Toddler Group; Guides and Scouts, both in groups from age 4 to 18, the Mothers Union and 'Friday Crafters'. These groups encouraged physical activity, community building and spiritual growth.

Other groups also used the church's facilities, and during the year these included the Comber Farmers' Market which met on the first Thursday of each month in the church car park, (weather permitting).

A fee is charged to non-parishioner groups and other external organisations for use of the church facilities. The fee is based on a standard tariff which is set annually by the Select Vestry, and all income received from the use of church facilities is applied for charitable purposes in defraying the operating costs, (such as heating, lighting, cleaning and maintenance), of opening the church and the halls. Parishioner groups using the church facilities are not charged but invited to contribute towards these operating costs.

For the protection of children, the child protection policy of the Church of Ireland (the 'Safeguarding Trust') regulations are applied for every instance where children or vulnerable adults are part of the church's life. Scouts and Guides follow their own policies in this matter.

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2024 (continued)

Social Outreach

St. Mary's has undertaken to engage with the wider society, particularly those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged, through social outreach activities. In the past year this has taken the form of ongoing collection, sorting and delivering of foodstuff, clothes and household items in partnership with the Newtownards Foodbank, supporting people in need in the Ards area. In addition, the parish arranges for donations of children's toys for distribution through the Salvation Army.

Public Benefit

Purpose 1

The expression of the precepts of the Christian religion through engagement with the general public, and in particular with the disadvantaged, the sick, the elderly and the young is a public benefit. This can be measured and evidenced through increased social integration and pastoral care delivered at the point of need. The direct benefit of participation in Church life includes the enjoyment of public worship and the giving and receiving of pastoral ministry, improved understanding of the values relating to civic engagement, community cohesion and providing a bridge between diverse groups as well as improved educational outcomes through the Church's ministry of teaching. The beneficiaries are the general public, and the public valuation of the benefits can be evidenced through attendance at public worship, participation in Church governance and willingness to support through contributions the continuing witness of the Church. The wider benefit to the public will outweigh any detriment arising in the course of Christian outreach. Any private benefit arising out of the fulfilment of our Christian ministry or to lay staff is essential to the fulfilment of the purpose of the advancement of religion. No Trustee may receive remuneration, reward or other private benefit for carrying out their Trustee responsibility.

Purpose 2

The direct benefits flowing from this purpose include the provision of archive records, public enjoyment of cultural and historic buildings and artefacts such as church plate, furnishings and materials as well as an overall improved appreciation of longstanding Christian heritage. This is demonstrated through on-going provision of access to records and the use made of these records in, for example, research and genealogy, through conservation efforts in respect of records, property and artefacts and the subsequent and continued requests for access and use of our materials by wider society. There is no harm arising from the purpose. The beneficiaries are the general public. No private benefit is received by Trustees fulfilling their Trustee responsibilities in respect of these records, buildings or artefacts, but in the course of conservation and to make these accessible to the public, the engagement of professional staff and services is essential but incidental to the fulfilment of the purpose.

Financial Review

Finances are managed by the Honorary Treasurer who distributes and presents a financial report to the trustees at the monthly Select Vestry meetings. St. Mary's operates separate bank accounts for each of its Funds and further details on the income and expenditure of the church during the year, and its state of affairs at the end of the year, can be seen in the Financial Statements. St. Mary's recorded a small surplus at the end of the year and the financial support of its parishioners is gratefully acknowledged.

St. Mary's continued with its fund-raising initiatives and applications for grant aid to bolster the Development Fund and secure finance for a major programme of repairs and upgrades to the Church, Glebe Cottage and Halls (the 'Renovation Works'). During the year, St. Mary's hosted a May Fayre that was well attended by the local community and raised £2,770 for the Development Fund. It is envisaged these funding initiatives will remain open for a period of at least 5 – 7 years to allow for completion of the Renovation Works, which it is estimated will cost c.£300,000 (inc. VAT). Deployment of secured funds against contractual commitments for delivery of the Renovation Works programme will be determined by the Select Vestry, under recommendation of the Property and Finance sub-committees, and phasing of the works is prioritised according to health and safety risk assessments.

In 2023, Consarc Design Group were retained to provide specialist architectural services relating to the like-for-like repair of deteriorating stonework and other dilapidations in the Church's Bell Tower, a Grade B Listed building, which is prioritised within the Renovation Works programme. Also, in 2023, St. Mary's was generously awarded grant aid of £9,250 towards the total cost of these repairs from the National Churches Trust and Benefact Trust of £5,000 and £4,250 respectively. Both awards are conditional, and the funding support can only be applied against expenditure incurred on the Bell Tower repairs, (the award from the National Churches Trust is in the form of an offer of financial support that is automatically withdrawn on 9 November 2025, if not used by that date).

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2024 (continued)

Invitations to tender for the Bell Tower repair work were issued on 30th October 2023 to five contractors, of which four completed tenders were submitted by the closing date of 27th November 2023. An evaluation of the tenders in January 2024 concluded that none could be accepted as the costings for the entire project were beyond the immediate means of St. Mary's. In consultation with the Scheme Architect, the repair scheme was separated into discrete work packages and two contractors were invited to tender for the work. Both contractors submitted bids and, following evaluation, a preferred tender for £130,000 was accepted by the Select Vestry at its meeting on 20 March 2024. Funding for the Bell Tower repair scheme was finally secured during the year, and which enabled the Select Vestry to enter contractual commitments for the remedial works to commence in October 2024 and which are expected to continue over a period of up to eight months before completion.

Reserves Policy

St Mary's is bound by the Church of Ireland 'Duty of Prudence' for church trustees to ensure that the parish is and remains solvent and by annual accounting principles to remain a going concern. The aim has been to keep sufficient free reserves to provide, as per good practice guidelines for charities, cover for between 4-6 months in relation to known liabilities.

Funds surplus to these requirements are set aside for capital building works that maintain the fabric of the church buildings and various mission activities, as determined by the Select Vestry.

Going Concern

The Select Vestry has reviewed the budgets for the year ahead and are satisfied that there are adequate funds in place to ensure that St. Mary's can continue its activities as a going concern and the financial statements for the year end 31 December 2024 can be signed off accordingly.

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing Document and Constitution of the Charity

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

Recruitment and Appointment of Select Vestry

All members of the Church of Ireland who are over the age of 18 and are either resident within the parish or live elsewhere but have been accustomed members of the congregation for at least three months and are giving to the church in a recordable manner, may register as members of the General Vestry of the parish. This allows 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.

Pay and remuneration

The Rector receives a stipend and office and locomotory allowances in accordance with figures approved by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, and pension contributions are paid in accordance with Diocesan recommendation.

Organisational Structure

The Select Vestry is responsible for the day-to-day management of the parish. The Select Vestry consists of the member of the clergy serving in the parish, any curate assistant ("the curate"), the Churchwardens, the Glebewardens and generally not more than twelve other members of the General Vestry elected at the Annual General Vestry meeting. 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 by the diocesan synod. Special meetings may be convened at any time by the Chairperson or the Churchwardens.

The Select Vestry of St Mary's have established three sub-committees, the Finance Committee, Property Committee and Human Resources ('HR') Committee to consider relevant matters and make recommendations to the trustees for decision making purposes. The finance and property committees meet regularly to respectively oversee the management of finances, (including the use of funds for projects), and ensuring that every aspect of the church and halls are inspected regularly, and remedial or permanent repairs effected immediately. The HR Committee meets on an ad-hoc basis, as required, to consider staffing related matters.

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2024 (continued)

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

The law applicable to charities in Northern Ireland requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the trustees have prepared the financial statements in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in the United Kingdom (accounting standards issued by the Financial Reporting Council in the UK, including Charities SORP (FRS 102) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" and promulgated by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in the United Kingdom and United Kingdom Law). Under that law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the charity and of the statement of financial activities of the charity for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

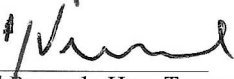
- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with applicable Accounting Standards and identify the standards in question, subject to any material departures being disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that St. Mary's will continue as a going concern.

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 financial position of St. Mary's and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and the provision of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of St. Mary's and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Signed on Behalf of the Trustees



Reverend Sam Johnston, Rector



David Peacock, Hon. Treasurer

Date 12 March 2025

NEWTOWNARDS/Comber/St. Mary/Down & Dromore/Church of Ireland

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102535

Annual return

St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber
Charity Number: NIC 102535

Independent examiner's report to the charity trustees of St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber

I report on the accounts of the St Mary's Parish Church, Comber for the year ended 31 December 2024, which are set out on pages 9 to 19.

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 Commission 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 Charity 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 a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Independent examiner's statement

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:



David J. Bennett
9 Londonderry Avenue
Comber
BT23 4DE

Date: 12 March 2025

NEWTOWNARDS/Comber/St. Mary/Down & Dromore/Church of Ireland

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102535

Accounts

Statement of Financial Activities

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Note	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Prior year total funds
		£	£	£	£	£
Income and endowments from:						
Donations and legacies	4	145,575	4,250		149,825	148,723
Income from charitable activities	5	13,313			13,313	9,177
Other trading activities	6	3,395			3,395	1,940
Investments	7	2,440	2,070		4,510	2,058
Other income	8	3,467			3,467	1,541
Total income		168,190	6,320		174,510	163,439
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds	9	7,519			7,519	3,724
Expenditure on charitable activities	10	162,163			162,163	140,781
Other expenditure	11	1,546	14		1,560	2,486
Total expenditure		171,228	14		171,242	146,991
Net income / (expenditure) resources before transfer		(3,038)	6,306		3,268	16,448
Transfers						
Transfers between funds	16	4,334	(4,334)		-	-
Net income / (expenditure) resources before other recognised gains and losses		1,296	1,972		3,268	16,448
Other recognised gains / losses						
Gains / (losses) on revaluation, fixed assets, charity's own use			1,591	335	1,926	(9,206)
Net movement in funds		1,296	3,563		5,194	7,242
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total funds brought forward	16	137,526	497,533	5,788	640,847	633,605
Total funds carried forward	16	138,822	501,096	6,123	646,041	640,847

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

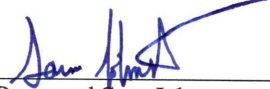
Balance sheet

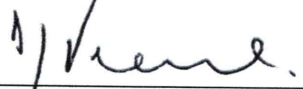
As at 31 December 2023

	Note	Total funds 2023	Prior year funds 2022
		£	£
Fixed assets			
Tangible fixed assets	14	404,610	404,610
Investments	15	71,483	69,557
		475,758	474,167
Current assets			
Cash at bank and in hand		233,736	235,003
		233,736	235,003
Liabilities			
Creditors: Amounts falling due in one year	17	5,002	4,706
		5,002	4,706
Net current assets less current liabilities			
		228,734	230,297
Total assets less current liabilities			
		704,492	704,464
Liabilities			
Creditors: Amounts falling due after more than one year	17	58,786	63,617
		58,786	63,617
Total net assets less liabilities			
		646,041	640,847
Represented by Charity Funds:			
Endowment	16	6,123	5,788
Restricted	16	501,096	497,533
Unrestricted	16	138,822	137,526
Funds of the church			
		646,041	640,847

The notes on pages 11 to 19 are an integral part of these financial statements.

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Select Vestry on 20 March 2024.


Reverend Sam Johnston,
Rector


David Peacock
Honorary Treasurer

Notes to the financial statements

Year ended 31 December 2023

1. General information

St Mary's Parish Church, Comber registered as a charity with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland on 15 May 2022 (under the name 'Newtownards/Comber/St. Mary/Down & Dromore/Church of Ireland'). Its principal place of business is The Square, Comber, Newtownards, County Down, BT23 5DU. The nature of the charity's operations and principal activities are the advancement of religion.

2. Accounting Policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation or uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

a. Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared under the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 in accordance with the Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s). The financial statements are presented in sterling which is the functional currency of the charity and rounded to the nearest £1.

b. Basis of financial statements

The accounts have been prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis, which recognises transactions and events only when cash is received or paid.

c. Preparation of the accounts on a going concern basis

The Select Vestry, as the Trustee body of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber, has reviewed cashflow forecasts for the coming year and are satisfied that the Parish has resources to provide a reasonable expectation that it can continue to meet its financial obligations as they fall due for the foreseeable future. Accordingly, these financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis.

d. Legacies

Legacies are included within Income under either unrestricted or restricted funds according to the terms under which the donation is made and when the amount has been received.

e. Tangible Fixed Assets

The tangible fixed assets of the Parish, retained for its own use, comprise:

- Church Building and Graveyard
- Parochial Hall
- Youth Hall
- Glebe Cottage
- Rectory

The Church Building and Graveyard are deemed to be Heritage assets as defined by the Charities SORP (FRS 102). These heritage assets are not included on the balance sheet as information on the cost or valuation is not available and

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2023

such information cannot be obtained at a cost commensurate with the benefit to the users of the accounts and to the parish.

The parochial hall, youth hall and Glebe Cottage were built prior to 1970. There are no reliable records of the cost of this construction and, as integral to the Church building and grounds, a valuation approach lacks sufficient reliability. As a result, these buildings are not recognised in the parish balance sheet. (Insurance values reconstruction at £1,424,686 (2022: £1,262,181)).

The rectory is recognised at its original cost of acquisition.

f. Fixed Asset Investments

Fixed asset investments comprise holdings in endowment and restricted funds bequeathed to the Parish, where the underlying assets comprise listed unit trusts and equity shares. These are stated at fair value at each year end date.

g. Financial Instruments

The Parish only holds financial assets and financial liabilities that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement amount.

h. Fund Structure

Funds are classified as either restricted funds, endowment funds or unrestricted funds. These classifications are defined as follows:

- (i) Restricted funds are subject to specific requirements as to their use which may be declared by the donor or with their authority, or created through legal processes, but still within the wider objects of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber.
- (ii) Endowment funds are funds which have been given on the condition that the original capital sum is not reduced, but the income therefrom is used for the purpose defined in accordance with the objects of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber.
- (iii) Unrestricted funds are expendable at the discretion of the Select Vestry in furtherance of the objects of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber. If parts of the unrestricted funds are earmarked at the discretion of the Select Vestry for a particular purpose, they are designated as a separate fund. This designation has an administrative purpose only and does not legally restrict the Select Vestry's discretion to apply the fund.

3. Critical accounting judgements and estimation uncertainty

Estimates and judgments made in the process of preparing the financial statements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. The Select Vestry do not consider that there are any critical judgments made in applying the Parish's accounting policies or that there are any critical accounting estimates or assumptions which may have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year.

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2023

Analysis of income

4. Donations and legacies

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Weekly envelopes / FWO & collections	105,734			105,734	106,176
Donations	5,707			5,707	18,235
General grants provided by other charities		4,250		4,250	-
Gift Aid Tax recovered	34,134			34,134	24,312
	<u>145,575</u>	<u>4,250</u>		<u>149,825</u>	<u>148,723</u>

5. Charitable activities

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Fundraising	5,750			5,750	2,059
Subscriptions					-
Church hall lettings - charitable object	7,063			7,063	6,558
Graveyard income	500			500	560
	<u>13,313</u>			<u>13,313</u>	<u>9,177</u>

6. Other trading activities

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Rent from land or buildings	1,565			1,565	1,940
Catering	1,830			1,830	
	<u>3,395</u>			<u>3,395</u>	<u>1,940</u>

7. Investment income

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Bank interest	1,643	349		1,992	52
Dividends	797	1,721		2,518	2,006
	<u>2,440</u>	<u>2,070</u>		<u>4,510</u>	<u>2,058</u>

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2023

8. Other income

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme grant				-	1,510
Energy bills relief scheme	2,399			2,399	0
Other	1,068			1,068	31
	<u>3,467</u>			<u>3,467</u>	<u>1,541</u>

Analysis of expenditure

9. Raising funds

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Interest charge on loan	3,711			3,711	2,059
Fund raising costs	3,808			3,808	1,666
	<u>7,519</u>			<u>7,519</u>	<u>3,724</u>

10. Charitable activities

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Wages and salaries	84,925			84,925	77,244
Diocesan assessment	16,527			16,527	15,371
Organist fee	8,325			8,325	6,870
Repairs & maintenance	3,003			3,003	3,606
Rates & water charges	401			401	3,543
Heat, light & power	15,183			15,183	7,686
Telephone, broadband and IT software	1,623			1,623	1,597
Insurance	4,688			4,688	4,658
Health and safety costs	4,239			4,239	4,055
Professional fees – Renovation Works	9,042			9,042	-
Charitable donations	2,571			2,571	2,478
Printing, postage and stationery	209			209	253
Upkeep of grounds and graveyard	5,462			5,462	
Office & Other equipment	3,942			3,942	
Other expenses	2,023			2,023	1,622
Preparing the rectory for first occupation					11,798
	<u>162,163</u>			<u>162,163</u>	<u>140,781</u>

St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber
Charity Number: NIC 102535

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2023

11. Other costs

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Bank fees and charges	354	14		368	610
Equipment repairs & renewals	338			338	273
Independent examiner's report	300			300	300
Payroll administration services	480			480	840
Sundry expenses	74			74	463
	<u>1,546</u>	<u>14</u>		<u>1,560</u>	<u>2,486</u>

12. Analysis of staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses, and the cost of key management personnel

Employees

	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£
Clergy Stipend and Allowances	42,085	38,848
Clergy pensions	6,441	5,909
Staff salaries	34,439	30,312
Sexton office allowance	500	300
Visiting & relief clergy	385	439
Social security costs	<u>1,075</u>	<u>1,436</u>
	<u>84,925</u>	<u>77,244</u>

The average number of employees during the year, calculated on the basis of a head count, was as follows:

	2023	2022
Ministerial staff	1	1
Administration	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>

There are no employees in receipt of benefits in excess of £60,000.

13. Key Management and Trustees

Key management are deemed to comprise the Trustees and who represent the Select Vestry. No trustee or a person related to a trustee had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by St Mary's Parish Church, Comber, during the year.

St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber
Charity Number: NIC 102535

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2023

The Reverend Sam Johnston received the following remuneration as approved by the General Synod and implemented by the Select Vestry of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber:

	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Stipend	37,428	34,337
Locomotor expenses	7,000	6,590
Expenses allowance	800	800
Pension contribution – employer element	3,390	3,110

The parish did not pay any expenses relating to the running costs of the Rectory occupied by the Rector.

14. Tangible Fixed Assets

<u>Cost</u>	Land & Buildings £	Total £
At 1 January 2023	404,610	404,610
Additions		
Disposals	-	-
At 31 December 2023	<u>404,610</u>	<u>404,610</u>

15. Fixed Asset Investments

Details	Fund to which the asset belongs	Current value 2023 £	Current value 2022 £
Units held by the Northern Ireland Central Investment Fund for Charities (managed fund)	Investment	6,123	5,788
Investment portfolio (managed fund)	Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust	<u>65,360</u>	<u>63,769</u>
		<u>71,483</u>	<u>69,557</u>

The Department for Communities hold units in the Northern Ireland Central Investment Fund for Charities as trustee for four, historic, donations/bequests, under which dividends thereon are paid to St Mary's Parish Church for disbursement by Select Vestry to local charitable causes. St Mary's Parish Church is not entitled to seek the capital from these donations/bequests.

The investment portfolio represents the capital account of the Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust and comprises holdings in listed bonds and equities that are managed by an independent specialist service provider. St Mary's Parish Church is entitled to seek the capital from this bequest, in accordance with the objectives of the Trust Deed.

St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber
Charity Number: NIC 102535

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2023

16. Funds of the Parish

	At 1 Jan 2023	Incoming resources	Outgoing resources	Transfers	Gains and Losses	At 31 Dec 2023
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Endowment funds						
Investment fund	5,788				335	6,123
	<u>5,788</u>				<u>335</u>	<u>6,123</u>
Restricted funds						
<i>Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust Fund - capital</i>	63,769				1,591	65,360
<i>Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust Fund - income</i>	9,503	1,836	14	(2,384)		8,941
Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust Fund	73,272	1,836	14	(2,384)	1,591	74,301
Development Fund		4,250				4,250
Mona Grey Legacy Fund	13,513	170				13,683
Rectory Fund	404,610					404,610
Youth Fund	6,138	64		(1,950)		4,252
	<u>497,533</u>	<u>6,320</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>(4,334)</u>	<u>1,591</u>	<u>501,096</u>
Unrestricted funds						
General Fund	64,267	146,678	150,274	4,946		65,617
Designated funds:						
Development Fund	71,062	19,840	18,318	(1,063)		71,522
Charities Fund	1,931	1,672	2,607	424		1,420
Rector's Discretionary Fund	265	0	29	27		263
	<u>137,526</u>	<u>168,190</u>	<u>171,228</u>	<u>4,334</u>		<u>138,822</u>
Total funds	<u>640,847</u>	<u>174,510</u>	<u>171,242</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,926</u>	<u>646,041</u>

Purpose of restricted funds

Mona Grey Legacy Fund	For the benefit of the youth in the Church and to promote youth work, through worship
Gwen Gracey Johnston Memorial Trust Fund	To further the ministry in the parish
Rectory Fund	To fund the purchase of a new rectory
Youth Fund	For youth related projects in the Parish

Purpose of unrestricted, including designated, funds

General Fund	For the day to day running of the Church
Development Fund	For any major renovation or repairs necessary for the upkeep of the Church and property
Charities Fund	For the segregation of charity collections pending disbursement to the relevant charitable body
Rector's Discretionary Fund	The Rector's discretionary fund (previously known as the Parish Emergency Fund) is available to provide support / immediate help to parishioners

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2023

17. Creditors

	2023	2022
	£	£
Bank loan: Amounts falling due in one year	5,002	4,706
Amounts falling due after more than one year	<u>58,786</u>	<u>63,617</u>
	<u>63,788</u>	<u>68,323</u>

On 19 November 2008 St Mary's Parish Church, Comber raised a bank loan of £250,000 to part fund the major building works comprising the South Transept. Repayments commenced on 31 December 2008 and will continue until 30 November 2033. The loan is unsecured and carries interest at 1% over base rate.

The bank loan is recorded within the parish's Development Fund.

18. Collections for Third Parties

	2023	2022
	£	£
Leprosy Mission	930	783
Newtownards Foodbank	332	
Royal British Legion	326	
Macmillan Cancer Support	332	
Alzheimer's Society in Northern Ireland	651	
Church Mission Society Ireland		242
The NET, Comber		922
Motor Neurone Disease Association (NI)		307
The Bishop's appeal		225

The collections for third parties were lodged to the Charities Fund and disbursed on approval by the Select Vestry.

19. Renovation Works

The following expenditure has been incurred to date on the Bell Tower Renovation Works, and comprises architectural and other professional services:

	Total	Total
	2023	2022
	£	£
Condition Report for the Bell Tower	5,622	-
Listed Building Consent from Historic Environment Division and technical support on grant applications	900	-
Technical support on grant application work	<u>2,520</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>9,042</u>	<u>-</u>

Notes to the financial statements (continued)

Year ended 31 December 2023

20. Taxation

St Mary's Parish Church, Comber is recognised as a charity for the purposes of applicable taxation legislation and is therefore not subject to taxation on its charitable activities.

21. Retirement benefit schemes

St Mary's Parish Church, Comber operates a defined contribution scheme, the Church of Ireland Clergy Pension Fund, for the Rector and other qualifying staff are enrolled into the government's National Employment Savings Trust (NEST) workplace pension scheme. The assets of the schemes are held separately from those of the parish in an independently administered fund.

NEWTOWNARDS/Comber/St. Mary/Down & Dromore/Church of Ireland

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102535

Annual report



St Mary's Parish Church, Comber
Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements
For the Year ending 31 December 2023

Trustees' annual report and financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2023

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St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber
Charity Number: NIC 102535

Administrative Details

Charity name: St Mary's Parish Church
Charity registration number: NIC 102535
Address: Church Office, 24 The Square, Comber, BT23 5DU

Trustees:

Ms Donna Curry
Mr John Fitchie
Mr David Buchanan
Mr Wilfred Fisher
Mr Herbie Rogers
Mrs Anne Hodge
Mr Samuel Curry
Rev Sam Johnston
Mr Mervyn Jess
Mr David Peacock
Mr Ian Hunter
Mrs Lynn Jess
Mr Desmond Mackey
Mr Sui-Wing Mo
Mrs Elizabeth Rogers From 18 April 2023
Mr Steven Sewell From 18 April 2023
Mrs Irene Waterson From 18 April 2023
Mr Ian McKeown Until 18 April 2023
Mrs Dorothy Brown Until 18 April 2023
Ms Carla Campbell Until 18 April 2023

Principal Office-Bearers

Clergy: Rev S Johnston
Sexton: Joe McIver
Honorary Treasurer: David Peacock
Honorary Secretary: Wilfie Fisher
Church Warden – Rector's: Elizabeth Rogers
Church Warden – People's: Steven Sewell
Glebe Warden – Rector's: John Fitchie
Glebe Warden – People's: Herbie Rogers

Independent Examiner

David J. Bennett
9 Londonderry Avenue
Comber
BT23 4DE

Bankers

Danske Bank
Belfast Business Centre
P.O. Box 183
Donegall Square West
Belfast BT1 6JS

Report of the trustees

The trustees present the annual report and accounts for St. Mary's Church, Comber for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Objectives And Activities

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

The principal function of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber (the 'Comber Parish') is to support the advancement of the Christian religion by promoting, through the work of Comber 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, Comber Parish 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 Comber Parish.

Achievement, Performance and Public Benefit

The Trustees believe that St Mary's Parish Church, Comber has succeeded in its charitable purpose in the following ways.

Advancement Of Religion – Our Worship

The Parish of Comber has one church dedicated to St. Mary. Founded in AD 1200 as a Cistercian Abbey, Christian worship has continued here ever since. When the Abbey was suppressed by Henry VIII in the mid-16th Century, the Christian presence continued with a planter church in the reformed Anglican tradition known in Ireland as the Church of Ireland. The dedication to St. Mary remained.

Throughout a typical year, there is public worship each Sunday in St. Mary's. Holy Communion is celebrated at 9:00 am and a main morning service at 11:00am, together with a service of Holy Communion each Wednesday morning at 10:00 am. The provision of online and CD services have continued to supplement in-person services. Special services at Easter and Christmas drew large numbers of attendees from the wider community.

Throughout the year the parish sought to provide a pastoral presence through its ministry team. Members of the community admitted to hospital or suffering bereavements make contact with the church and their spiritual needs are addressed. Whether or not they are active members of the parish, we have sought to help people in their need.

The Rector, the Rev. Sam Johnston, continued in his appointment as the person with pastoral responsibility for the parish. He, along with the other clergy and readers, provided the leadership in worship. Trustee meetings were chaired by the Rev. Johnston.

Property Use

Our church halls were available and used regularly throughout the year by both members and non-members of the parish, including a Parent and Toddler Group; Guides and Scouts, both in groups from age 4 to 18; Mothers Union and a Silver Band. These groups encouraged physical activity, community building and spiritual growth.

Other groups also used the church's facilities and, during the year, these included the Comber Farmers' Market which met on the first Thursday of each month in the church car park, (weather permitting).

A fee is charged to non-parishioner groups and other external organisations for use of the church facilities. The fee is based on a standard tariff which is set annually by the Select Vestry, and all income received from the use of church facilities is applied for charitable purposes in defraying the operating costs, (such as heating, lighting, cleaning and maintenance), of opening the church halls. Parishioner groups using the church facilities are invited to make a contribution towards these operating costs.

For the protection of children, the child protection policy of the Church of Ireland (the 'Safeguarding Trust') regulations are applied for every instance where children or vulnerable adults are part of the church's life. Scouts and Guides follow their own policies in this matter.

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023 (continued)

Social Outreach

The parish has undertaken to engage with the wider society, particularly those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged, through social outreach activities. In the past year this has taken the form of ongoing collection, sorting and delivering of foodstuff, clothes and household items in partnership with the Newtownards Foodbank, supporting people in need in the Ards area.

Public Benefit

Purpose 1

The expression of the precepts of the Christian religion through engagement with the general public, and in particular with the disadvantaged, the sick, the elderly and the young is a public benefit. This can be measured and evidenced through increased social integration and pastoral care delivered at the point of need. The direct benefit of participation in Church life includes the enjoyment of public worship and the giving and receiving of pastoral ministry, improved understanding of the values relating to civic engagement, community cohesion and providing a bridge between diverse groups as well as improved educational outcomes through the Church's ministry of teaching. The beneficiaries are the general public, and the public valuation of the benefits can be evidenced through attendance at public worship, participation in Church governance and willingness to support through contributions the continuing witness of the Church. The wider benefit to the public will outweigh any detriment arising in the course of Christian outreach. Any private benefit arising out of the fulfilment of our Christian ministry or to lay staff is essential to the fulfilment of the purpose of the advancement of religion. No Trustee may receive remuneration, reward or other private benefit for carrying out their Trustee responsibility.

Purpose 2

The direct benefits flowing from this purpose include the provision of archive records, public enjoyment of cultural and historic buildings and artefacts such as church plate, furnishings and materials as well as an overall improved appreciation of longstanding Christian heritage. This is demonstrated through on-going provision of access to records and the use made of these records in, for example, research and genealogy, through conservation efforts in respect of records, property and artefacts and the subsequent and continued requests for access and use of our materials by wider society. There is no harm arising from the purpose. The beneficiaries are the general public. No private benefit is received by Trustees fulfilling their Trustee responsibilities in respect of these records, buildings or artefacts, but in the course of conservation and to make these accessible to the public, the engagement of professional staff and services is essential but incidental to the fulfilment of the purpose.

Financial Review

Finances are managed by the Honorary Treasurer who distributes and presents a financial report to the trustees at the monthly Select Vestry meetings. The Parish operates separate bank accounts for each of its Funds and further details on the income and expenditure of St Mary's Parish Church during the year can be seen in the Financial Statements. The Parish Church recorded a small surplus at the end of the year and the financial support of its parishioners during the year is gratefully acknowledged.

St. Mary's continued with its fund-raising initiatives and applications for grant aid to bolster the Development Fund and secure finance for a major programme of repairs and upgrades to the Church, Glebe Cottage and Halls (the 'Renovation Works'). It is envisaged these funding initiatives will remain open for a period of at least 5 – 7 years to allow for completion of the Renovation Works, which it is estimated will cost c.£300,000 (inc. VAT). Deployment of secured funds against contractual commitments entered into for delivery of the Renovation Works will be determined by the Select Vestry, under recommendation of the Property and Finance sub-committees, and phasing of the works is prioritised according to health and safety risk assessments.

During the year, Consarc Design Group were retained to provide specialist architectural services relating to the like-for-like repair of deteriorating stonework and other dilapidations in the Church's Bell Tower, a Grade B Listed building, which is prioritised within the Renovation Works programme. The church was generously awarded grant aid of £9,250 towards the total cost of these repairs from the National Churches Trust and Benefact Trust of £5,000 and £4,250 respectively. Both awards are conditional, and the funding support can only be applied against expenditure incurred on the Bell Tower repairs (the award from the National Churches Trust is in the form of an offer of financial support that is automatically withdrawn on 9 November 2025, if not used by that date).

Invitations to tender for the Bell Tower repair work were issued on 30th October 2023 to five contractors, of which four completed tenders were submitted by the closing date of 27th November 2023. An evaluation of the tenders in January 2024 concluded that none could be accepted as the costs for the entire project were beyond the immediate means of St. Mary's. The programme of repairs was subsequently revised into two phases, with the initial phase prioritised by Health & Safety considerations and for which two contractors were invited to tender for the work. Both contractors submitted bids and, following evaluation, a preferred tender for £123,100 for this phase of the Bell Tower repair work was accepted by Select Vestry at their meeting on 20 March 2024.

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023 (continued)

Subject to contractual arrangements, and with secured funding for this amount in place, the selected contractor will be appointed to undertake the initial phase of repair works to the Bell Tower during 2024.

Reserves Policy

St Mary's Parish, Comber is bound by the Church of Ireland 'Duty of Prudence' for church trustees to ensure that the parish is and remains solvent and by annual accounting principles to remain a going concern. Our aim has been to keep sufficient free reserves to provide, as per good practice guidelines for charities, cover for between 4-6 months in relation to known liabilities.

Funds surplus to these requirements are set aside for capital building works that maintain the fabric of the church buildings and various mission activities, as determined by the Select Vestry.

Going Concern

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

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing Document and Constitution of the Charity

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

Recruitment and Appointment of Select Vestry

All members of the Church of Ireland who are over the age of 18 and are either resident within the parish or live elsewhere but have been accustomed members of the congregation for at least three months and are giving to the church in a recordable manner, may register as members of the General Vestry of the parish. This allows 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.

Pay and remuneration

The Rector receives a stipend and office and locomotory allowances in accordance with figures approved by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland and pension contributions are paid in accordance with Diocesan recommendation.

Organisational Structure

The Select Vestry is responsible for the day-to-day management of the parish. The Select Vestry consists of the member of the clergy serving in the parish, any curate assistant ("the curate"), the Churchwardens, the Glebewardens and generally not more than twelve other members of the General Vestry elected at the Annual General Vestry meeting. 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 by the diocesan synod. Special meetings may be convened at any time by the Chairperson or the Churchwardens.

The Select Vestry of St Mary's Parish Church, Comber have established three sub-committees, the Finance Committee, Property Committee and HR Committee to consider relevant matters and make recommendations to the trustees for decision making purposes. The finance and property committees meet regularly to respectively oversee the management of finances, (including the use of funds for projects), and ensuring that every aspect of the church and halls are inspected regularly, and remedial or permanent repairs effected immediately. The HR Committee meets on an ad-hoc basis, as required, to consider employer related matters.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023 (continued)

The law applicable to charities in Northern Ireland requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the trustees have prepared the financial statements in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in the United Kingdom (accounting standards issued by the Financial Reporting Council in the UK, including Charities SORP (FRS 102)

“Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)“ and promulgated by the Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023 (continued)

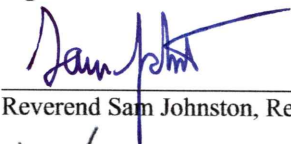
Institute of Chartered Accountants in the United Kingdom and United Kingdom Law). Under that law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the charity and of the statement of financial activities of the charity for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

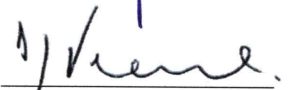
- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with applicable Accounting Standards and identify the standards in question, subject to any material departures being disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Parish will continue as a going concern.

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 financial position of the Parish and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and the provision of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Parish and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Signed on Behalf of the Trustees



Reverend Sam Johnston, Rector



David Peacock, Hon. Treasurer

Date 20 March 2024

NEWTOWNARDS/Comber/St. Mary/Down & Dromore/Church of Ireland

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102535

Annual return

St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber
Charity Number: NIC 102535

Independent examiner's report to the charity trustees of St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber

I report on the accounts of the St Mary's Parish Church, Comber for the year ended 31 December 2023, which are set out on pages 9 to 19.

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 Commission 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 Charity 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.

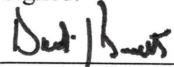
My role is to state whether any material matters have come to my attention giving me cause to believe:

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 a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Independent examiner's statement

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:



David J. Bennett
9 Londonderry Avenue
Comber
BT23 4DE

Date: 20 March 2024