

# **Movilla Abbey Church – Church of Ireland & Methodist Church in Ireland Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023**

**Movilla Abbey Church  
63 Movilla Road  
Newtownards BT23 8EZ  
Charity Number: NIC 102613**

With regard to the Charity Commission's public benefit requirement statutory guidance, the trustees are pleased to present this year's annual report.

## **Introduction**

Movilla Abbey Church (Church of Ireland & Methodist Church in Ireland) is a lively and friendly church in the heart of east Newtownards close to the ancient ruins of Movilla Abbey. It was established in 1980, as a shared ecumenical partnership between the Church of Ireland (COI) and the Methodist Church in Ireland (MCI), by whom the property is equally shared and owned.

You may recall that our 2022 CCNI Annual Report, apprised you of our becoming a united 'Covenant' Church belonging fully and equally to both the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Church of Ireland, in 2021. We also reported that our constitutional governance arrangements changed to reflect that in November 2022, with the formation of a single, united Leadership Team to fulfil the executive role of both a COI Select Vestry and a MCI Church Council. We are pleased to inform you that from January 2023, our (formerly) three separate banking accounts were merged into one business account. The accompanying 2023 Financial Report, and all future reports will reflect this change.

## **Purpose and function**

The charitable purpose of the Church of Ireland, of which Movilla Abbey Church remains a local expression, and through whom we act as Charity Trustees, is the advancement of the Christian religion.

The principal function of Movilla Abbey Church is to support the advancement of the Christian religion, through engagement with the general public, by promoting 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 an expression of Christian faith. The Church's care for the disadvantaged, the sick, the elderly and the young is a clear public benefit. It's ministries of baptism, marriage and funerals provide a vital public service to the community and families from birth, through life and death.

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 both children and adults.

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.

As a result of these objectives, Movilla Abbey Church has custody of buildings, property, records, materials and artefacts of significance to the cultural and religious heritage, and maintenance of which (until November 2022) was undertaken separately by both the COI Select Vestry, and the MCI Church Council. Shared responsibilities were governed by representation to a third shared body – the Joint Management Committee. From 20<sup>th</sup> November 2022, a new united governing body (the Leadership Team) was established, which fulfils all the roles and responsibilities of both Select Vestry and Church Council, and (now defunct) Joint Management Committee.

### **Governing Document and Constitution of the Charity**

Chapter III of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland governs Parishes and Parochial organisation.

### **Organisational Structure**

The Church Leadership Team members are the charity's trustees, and are responsible for the day-to-day management of Movilla Abbey Church. It consists of the serving member(s) of the clergy, two Church Stewards (*analogous to Church Wardens in COI, and Society Stewards in MCI*), two Property Stewards (*analogous to Glebe Wardens in COI, and Property Stewards in MCI*), two Finance Stewards (*analogous to Treasurers in COI and MCI*) and six other Leadership Team members. All Church Leadership Team members are nominated, elected and appointed at the Annual Church Meeting (*analogous to Annual General Vestry Meeting in COI and Annual Congregational Meeting in MCI*).

The Leadership Team (LT) is chaired by the incumbent minister or other member of the clergy officiating in the church. LT members are responsible for making decisions on matters of general concern and importance to the life and worship of the church, including issues of fabric and finance. The LT meets at times fixed by members (currently monthly during term-time) or by the COI Diocesan Synod, or MCI Connexion. Special meetings may be convened at any time by the Chairperson or the Church Steward.

From Nov 2022, when the LT was first officially constituted, Office Holders and Members were:

Clergy	Rev Alan Peek (Co-Chair)
	Rev Michael Spence (Co-Chair)

Church Stewards	Patricia Meara Lorraine McVeigh
Treasurers	Karen Boyd Cheryl Stewart
Property Stewards	Ian Lappin Robin Hamill
Leadership Team Members:	Trevor Bristow Gary Dunn Barbara Haughan Rosemary Lappin Georgie Herron Gillian Clarke

Our inaugural ACM was held on 30 April 2023, where the above names were formally ratified and approved, with one subsequent adjustment. Due to personal circumstances, Karen Boyd decided to stand down from the Leadership Team. So, at our last Leadership Team meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> April, it was proposed and decided to ask Arty McAlinney to take her place and three-year term. He was chosen because when nominated for election in November, he had the next highest number of votes.

### **Public Worship & Working Together**

Our main public gathering for worship is at 11am every Sunday, which are focussed differently, depending on which Sunday in the month it is

First Sunday	Morning Worship with Holy Communion
Second Sunday	Morning Worship
Third Sunday	All-Age Worship
Fourth Sunday	Morning Worship
Fifth Sunday	Morning Worship

Every service has a relaxed feel to it with a mixture of traditional and modern worship, broadly following the liturgy for a Service of the Word. The Gospel is preached with expectation of change in hearers, and with instruction on how to lead a life centred around Jesus.

During the service there is an opportunity for young people to experience more through Sunday School Kid's Groups. Families with pre-schoolers can make use of our Living Room facility with crèche facilities available while watching the service on a screen. Before and after the service, guests are offered tea, coffee and further fellowship in our Welcome Centre.

Throughout 2023, we continued to stream our services online, and there is a regular 'online congregation' who benefit from this service.

Like many other churches, we did not restart weekly evening services after Lockdown, following a review of their usefulness and popularity. But in June 2023, we decided to experiment with a new monthly, attractive service of contemporary worship, aimed at offering an hour of worship, with

the opportunity for Prayer Ministry from trained practitioners. It happened at 7pm on every first Sunday. By December 2023, owing to its fruitfulness, it was anticipated to continue in 2024.

Our midweek Life Groups (smaller home-based groups for worship, bible study, prayer and outreach) continued to connect people, and resource them for Christian life and mission.

### **Community Involvement, Outreach and Mission**

Here is a summary of our community engagement in 2023:

- Nursery & Playgroup – this is a private enterprise, independent of Movilla Abbey Church, that rent a significant section of our buildings Mon-Fri during term times, but it has very strong ties to our church community, including staff.
- Parent & Toddler Groups – Two weekly sessions on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, which have had problems with over-subscription, necessitating limiting places.
- Wednesday Coffee Shop – a thriving outreach, run by dedicated volunteers to community members from all walks of life, providing cooked breakfasts, tea, coffee and snacks. Operates in our purpose-built ‘Welcome Space’ with commercial-quality seating and dining.
- Seniors Lunches – a fortnightly gathering providing important social space for isolated and vulnerable older adults, as well as a nutritious hot two-course meal.
- Children’s Uniformed Organisations – Guiding, Scouting and Boys Brigade organisations for children of all ages, meet every night Monday to Thursday.
- School Engagement – Church members serving as Transferor Reps on different local school Boards of Governors. We also provide a fortnightly, free coffee and drinks ministry to parents and children at the school gates of Abbey Primary School.
- Summer Kids Club & Youth Drop-in – in July 2023 we ran another fun-packed, Kid’s club for over 80 local children (P1-P7), with a ‘Super-Mario’ theme, providing lunch in an attempt to address ‘holiday hunger’ in poorer families. In the evening, we hosted a Youth (Yr8-Yr14) which attracted about 35 teens through the week. We followed up on this initiative by starting a regular Friday evening Youth Coffee Bar in September. As of Dec 2023, approx. 50 young people are regular attenders
- Litter-Picking Ministry – a monthly community service on Saturday mornings, providing picking (and safely disposing) of public litter on public streets within a half-mile radius of our church premises is ongoing
- And other work going on outside the building each week includes Pastoral care visits, Life groups each with their own community mission engagement including serving at Bowtown Kids Club (sadly postponed by Ards & ND Borough Council in mid-2023 due to building faults), Rivenwood outreach to new residents, and Comber ‘Muddy church’ for young families.
- And then we have the charitable work through which we support organisations by regular donations or fundraising efforts (usually fry mornings, facilitated by our Catering Team). In 2022 we have donated to Newtownards food bank, CAP, Street Pastors, LINK, Churches Ministry of Healing, Leprosy Mission, Christian Aid and others.

- Christmas 2023 included several community engagement highlights: a well-attended Carols by candlelight service, a Blue Christmas service (a reflective seasonal service for bereaved and lonely persons), a well-attended nativity service for young families and small children. And our 'Christmas Light' event, run in partnership with Movilla Presbyterian Church, where we invited local families to an outdoor, dramatised, re-telling by costumed characters, of the Nativity story, followed by a puppet show, some crafts and food indoors. Over 250 people attended.

### **Compliance with Public Benefit**

The charitable purpose of Movilla Abbey Church is the advancement of religion through holding regular worship and communicating with the caring for parishioners and others in our community.

This is achieved through Christian witness and outreach, and is delivered through the provision of public worship and the various activities outlined above. It is of benefit to all in the community. There is also pastoral support and visits for those in need.

The Parish has given careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that activities entered into during the year have helped to achieve the Parish's objectives and activities, while also providing public benefit.

### **Financial Review**

Full details of the receipts and expenditure can be found in the charity accounts submitted separately, alongside this report. All items of income and expenditure included within the receipts and Payments Statement have been accounted for on a cash receipts basis.

### **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 ended 31 December 2023 can be signed off as a going concern.

### **Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities**

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the statement of receipts and payments and statement of assets and liabilities in accordance with the applicable law and regulations. The law applicable to charities in Northern Ireland with income of less than £250,000 requires the trustees to prepare a statement of receipts and payments and a statement of assets and liabilities for each financial year.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the Parish's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time.

**Signed on behalf of the trustees**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Peek', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Trustee: Rev Alan Peek  
Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Spence', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Trustee: Rev Michael Spence  
Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2024