

**St Patrick's Parish Church, Drumbeg**  
**Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements**  
**Year ended 31 December 2023**

**Trustees' Report**

The trustees present the annual report and statements of Receipts and Payments and Assets and Liabilities for the Parish Church for the year ended 31 December 2023.

**Chairman's Report**

**1. Structure Governance and Management:**

Drumbeg Parish follows the standard Church of Ireland structure at Parish level as set out in the Constitution of the Church of Ireland, governed by General Synod and the Synod of the Diocese of Down and Dromore. At Parish level it is managed by a Select Vestry (the trustees) and is chaired by the Rector of the Parish, Reverend William S Nixon. The Select Vestry is elected annually at the Easter General Vestry (to be held in the three weeks preceding or following Easter Sunday) where all Parish members from the Register of Vestrymen are eligible to vote or be appointed. The Select Vestry consists of 12 members plus two Churchwardens and two Glebewardens. The Churchwardens for 2023 were Mr Raymond Kerr and Ms Wendy Kidd. The Glebewardens were Mr Hugh Crookshanks (deceased) and Dr Brian Dean. The Honorary Treasurer appointed is Mr William (Bill) Miscampbell. The Rev'd William S Nixon appointed Mr Raymond Kerr as an interim Rector's Glebe Warden after the death of Mr Crookshanks. The Honorary Secretary was Miss Nicola Wadsworth. We express thanks to Miss Wadsworth and Mr Miscampbell, the glebewardens, the churchwardens and to the Select Vestry for their hard work in 2023. We note with sadness the passing of two Trustees in 2023; Mrs Suzanne Brown and Mr Hugh Crookshanks. Mr Leo Rossi was co-opted to the Select Vestry to help with the vacancies left by Mr Crookshanks and Mrs Brown.

The Select Vestry is responsible for the day-to-day management and maintenance of Parish Finances, Parish Buildings & Glebe Lands and Parish Furnishings; known as the three 'f's: Finance, Fabric and Furnishings. They also have a responsibility to the necessary provision of monies and resources to support the Rector and Ministry Team in the mission objectives and ministry activities of the Parish.

The Select Vestry is supported in this work by the local Diocesan Office in the Diocese of Down and Dromore through the Diocesan Council, the Diocesan Secretary, the Diocesan Accountant and the Administration staff. The Bishop of Down and Dromore is the senior clerical officiant in the Diocese and as such is ultimately responsible for the pastoral and spiritual oversight of the Rector of the Parish.

**Objectives and Activities**

We are a Church of Ireland Parish Church in the Diocese of Down & Dromore within the context of the wider Anglican Communion committed to both Word and Sacrament and seeking to minister to all ages and backgrounds, expressing our mission in the following key areas:

**• Teaching the Bible**

Faithfully teaching the Bible in Church and in homes; equipping everyone in our care to live out the truth wherever they are.

- **Ministering In Prayer**

Praying for one another after church on Sunday mornings; Praying for the life of the Church at regular Prayer Meetings and in our homes. We are available to pray. No prayer request is too big, too small or too inconvenient.

- **Making disciples of all ages**

Creating a learning community, that helps people at all stages in their faith journey to move towards maturity in Christ.

- **Proclaiming Jesus locally and globally**

We believe that we have something so exciting to share that we can't keep it to ourselves. We want our community and other communities across the globe to meet Jesus and discover real life.

- **Caring for people in Jesus' name locally and globally**

We believe Jesus commands us to 'love our neighbour as ourselves', so we seek to support people in their mental, physical and relational needs. We seek to stand alongside, and advocate for: the forgotten, the oppressed and the poor of body, mind and soul, both on our doorsteps and further afield.

- **Caring for God's Creation**

We believe the natural environment is God's gift to humanity and as such it is our responsibility to steward the natural resources of the world in a 'green' manner for successive generations. We seek to achieve this by calling on our membership to encourage and to implement sustainable environmental practices in their daily lives.

## **2. Select Vestry Activities**

2023 was a busy year in the life of the Parish as we moved on from the restraints of Covid19. Numbers attending Church services have held up, with a slight increase on 2022. During 2023 we increased the staff team by employing a Curate Assistant to oversee the work with our JAM Sunday School, to help with the work of youth and children's ministry and to augment the pastoral work in the Parish alongside Rev'd William Nixon and Miss Marion Wilcox our Parish Lay Reader (Marion is a volunteer staff member). It was necessary to bring Rev'd Timothy Eldon (Curate Assistant) into the staff team to take on some of the responsibilities held by our Family Worker Rachel Pascu who resigned in September 2023 due to her husband's work relocating them to Hollywood. Rev'd Timothy Eldon is a useful addition to the staff team. We note with thanks the huge contributions made to the Parish by Mrs Rachel Pascu and want to wish her and her family every blessing in their new roles in Hollywood Parish.

In 2023 we also changed some of the roles of those who help with the upkeep of the grounds and with the general cleaning roles around the various parish buildings. Mr David Dodds, a contractor, has been given a 'greater' role in the upkeep of groundworks which has meant an increase in his monthly charges and Mr Mark McNeice has ceased to be a contractor and is now employed by the Parish in the role of the general Church and Halls Cleaner, with a further role in helping to set up and tidy up after events.

Mr Michael Barnett, the Parish GDPR Data controller, appointed by the Trustees, continues to uphold our GDPR policy procedures. Mr Barnett also keeps on top of the safe storage of data regarding risk management and welfare of children issues. Licences have been purchased to

further facilitate the online presence of the Church in order to allow us to have as wide a reach as possible with information about Parish activities. We continue to be available publicly using our livestream facilities which were purchased and installed in 2021 and have in place the necessary GDPR procedures, policies and necessary licences to administer this safely and legally.

The ongoing welfare of children and vulnerable adults is looked after by a Safeguarding Trust Panel. In 2023 Mrs Susan Boreham resigned from the Panel due to family commitments. Dr Rosie Steele successfully completed her necessary training as a Panel member through the Church of Ireland Safeguarding Trust training programme and is now in place alongside Rev'd Williams S Nixon and Dr Brian Dean. The work of the Safeguarding Trust panel is both important and appreciated in the Parish. The Church of Ireland Guidelines for the Welfare of Children is implemented by the Safeguarding Trust Panel. We have trained a further eight people to work with children and vulnerable adults in the Parish.

The Parish Health and Safety Committee (H&S), established in 2017, has continued to be a busy group in the Parish and meets regularly. Updates of their meetings are recorded in the Vestry minutes. The H&S Committee members have changed due to the death of Mr Hugh Crookshanks and the resignations of Mr Michael Barnett and Mrs Susan Boreham. The new Health and Safety Committee was reconstituted by the Select Vestry in September 2023. Its new membership is as follows: Mr Leo Rossi (Chair), Mr Raymond Kerr, Mr Brian Dean and Rev'd William Nixon. We are thankful for the work of all who have served on this committee and to those who have taken on new roles in 2023. They deserve sincere thanks for their continued efforts to ensure that all aspects of Church life continue in as safe a manner as possible. Annual PAT Tests of Electrical appliances are carried out and Risk Assessments are both prepared and checked for all the activities in the Parish. The Select Vestry are careful to ensure that safety is high on the agenda. Under the direction of the Parish Health and Safety Committee all activities, groups and congregations in the Parish are subject to carrying out biennial fire drills and evacuations. On the death of Mr Crookshanks, Mr Mike Barnett and Mr Raymond Kerr have taken over the joint role looking after the repair of the Parish Graveyard and the associated record keeping.

### **3. Achievements and Performance:**

In 2023 we continued to seek to fulfil our commitments to international and local missional and humanitarian projects. To this end we have raised over £42000 for charitable purposes. This is to be commended and is a wonderful testimony to the hard work and generosity of all involved.

Our ministry objectives of making disciples of all ages and teaching the Bible continues to be facilitated through our new fortnightly Life Groups, where groups of 8-10 people meet in various homes around the Parish for Bible Study, Prayer and Fellowship support. There are now 63 people attached to a Life Group and we have six well established groups. We have also reinstated our Sunday Evening services with two traditional and two contemporary services each month. The SOAK evening service on the fourth Sunday evening is proving a valuable tool in helping to grow and encourage discipleship and has seen an encouraging group of around 25 people attending.

Children and young families are very well looked after through JAM (Sunday School) and Messy Church. Our Little Lambs, mother/father and toddler group has grown well in 2023 and is now

looked after by a team of volunteers after the departure of our Family Worker. We are grateful to Mabel Quinn, Phylis Long, Ruth Miscampbell, Alexandra McClung and Daphne Dunlop for their support in running this group.

The Boys Brigade (BB) Company and the Girls Brigade (GB) companies both continue to grow. James Cochrane leads the BB and we are pleased that Sarah Price has taken over the Officer's role in the GB. She is ably supported by a group of volunteers. All of our Children's and Youth work was well looked after and overseen by Rachel Pascu, but is now overseen jointly by Rev'd William S Nixon and Rev'd Timothy Eldon. Mark Trimble now takes responsibility for the Youth Ministry alongside Rev'd Timothy Eldon and Miss Clare Woods; our new youth initiative in the Parish which is called 'Identify'..

The annual prayer weekend was very well supported on the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend of June 2023 and this year it was led by an international SOMA Mission Team; this was a blessing to us all.

Global Mission relations continued to be well supported in the Parish with the good news that the school at Nyapeya, Northern Uganda has now been fenced in using funds raised in the Parish and with the help of a kind donor to Fields of Life, the charity with whom we partner in the project at Nyapeya School. We were also pleased to donate over £4000 to the work of Habitat for Humanity through the Rector's Christmas Sit-Out. We look forward to being able to support CMS Ireland and the Archdiocese of Alexandria (Egypt) through a school's project in 2024.

We have continued to financially support the outreach work at Dundrum Community Church both financially and in terms of resourcing the leadership there through my line management of Mr Colin Morris. We are pleased to discover that by the Summer of 2023, the project at Dundrum has become self-sufficient. The Select Vestry have since taken the decision to stop their financial support of Dundrum, but the Rector will continue to have some oversight of the project until mid-2024.

We also continue to help to resource St Andrew's Ballyhalbert through oversight of their Select Vestry, the provision of Parish Lay Readers to Sunday cover for holidays and sickness and through my line-management of Mr Raymond McClure, the lay Parish Worker, on behalf of the Diocese of Down and Dromore. This missional relationship has again proved to be a growing and encouraging congregation. In 2023 Mr McClure was moved from a part-time position to a fulltime position at Ballyhalbert and is now working in a joint parish and diocesan project called Ards Connect. Through financial help of a number of supporters in the Parish at Drumbeg, the Diocese and other granting bodies this ministry is now fully funded.

We are pleased to have hosted two services, followed by food, for the migrant and refugee communities of the greater Belfast area. Both services saw over 140 attending. We are grateful to Peter Samir of SIM and to Mr Nigel Quinn for their tireless help in organising these important events in the Church calendar, where we were able to be a voice of welcome and inclusion to those who live on the margins of our society.

Pastoral care has continued to be a focus for the Parish. This is delivered through the Rector, the Lay Reader (Miss Marion Wilcox) and now Rev'd Timothy Eldon (September 2023). The Parish

has a wonderful spirit of pastoral care which continues to happen through the friendships and fellowship groups of the Parish. Our Coffee Stop, Art Club, Bowling Club and Heavenly Crafts groups are vital to the life of the parish in providing friendship, fellowship and company for those who live alone. We also began a fellowship group called 'Chums and Crumbs' in 2023 which has been a wonderful source of friendship and companionship in the Parish. Thank you to all the leaders of this various groups and for how each of the activities of the Parish allow us to keep a focus on the community around us.

#### **4. Chairman's Financial Review:**

As with many in the Faith and Charity sector there is always a need to keep an eye on income and outgoings. Thankfully our income from FWO's and Standing Orders held their own in 2023, but we have set up a new Parish Finance Committee whose task it is to work with the Treasurer to ensure good governance, to watch costs and to seek to raise further funds for the work of the Parish. Increases in salary costs means we need to encourage our Parishioners to greater generosity. This will be address in the Spring of 2024 through a Stewardship Campaign using the diocesan Generosity Project. Our Treasurer, Mr William Miscampbell, has worked hard to provide the Select Vestry with monthly financial reports accompanied by all the necessary information to allow them as Trustees to keep abreast of the finances. All Select Vestry (Trustees Meetings) in 2023 were able to take place in-person.

The Rectory received a new shower room in 2023 as part of our ongoing updates of the glebe properties, a fence was put up at the COOP Coffee Van to ensure safety for all users and the Parish Halls and two rooms at the Rectory were painted/redecorated. This is important work as we are responsible for the good upkeep of the glebe.

The Treasurer was supported in his endeavours by a team of two, Mr Hugh Crookshanks and Mr Gordon Poots. On the passing of Mr Crookshanks the new finance team is now: Mr Raymond Kerr, Mr James Cochrane, Mr Leo Rossi and Rev'd William S Nixon. We are grateful to Mr Kevin Brown for joining the 'count team' who look after the FWO's counting each week. Mr Brown has replaced Mr Crookshanks (deceased) in this role. Thank you to all involved in looking after the finances, FWO's and Gift Aid Claims. Mr James Cochrane has taken on the role of Assistant-Treasurer.

I extend my thanks to all the Trustees with particular thanks to the Honorary Treasurer, the Glebe Wardens, the Honorary Secretary, the Finance Team, the Select Vestry and alongside that extend sincerest thanks to all the ministry volunteers who continue to made this ministry in the name of Christ a blessing to the Parishioners and wider community of Drumbeg in 2023.

The congregation is growing in faith and number and our continued outreach, care and love for the global and local community is as source of blessing to us all. We seek to make a genuine difference in the lives of those we serve and it is my sense that we can truly assert the words of Christ himself to be true of our work and ministry: 'well done good and faithful servants'.

With thanksgiving to God for his work among us and to all who support the work at Drumbeg Parish. 'Unless the Lord builds the house the labourers labour in vain' (Psalm 127).

*William S Nixon* (Rev William S Nixon (Select Vestry Chairman)).