

# IRISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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The Trustees present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's governing document, the Charities Act 2011 and "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)" (effective 1 January 2019).

#### **Objectives and activities**

##### **a. Public Benefit Statement**

The Irish Council of Churches is committed to the advancement of the Christian religion and the promotion of religious harmony. Its vision is to be a benchmark of unity in Christ for churches and communities globally by developing and providing a channel for Ireland's churches to connect through a common belief in Christ.

Five values underpin its work:

The goal and grounding of all that we do is our shared Faith in Jesus Christ; we seek to be faithful to God and committed to our journey together.

Holiness: willing to be opened and changed by God as we connect with each other and meet together in the Lord; experiencing God's holiness as we spend time together in prayer and seeking to be reconciled in Christ.

Respect: respecting and seeking to understand each other's beliefs; we are aware of our diversity while recognising the presence of Christ in each other as we seek to understand the fullness of God's revelation for the world.

Hope: hoping in Christ and living in the power of the Holy Spirit sustaining us and fueling our courage; we are courageous in our vision and mission having the strength together to fulfil our reason to be.

Witness: witnessing to God's kingdom of justice, peace and reconciliation through word and action; to our common discipleship in the way we live and work together; and as we listen to the world in which we live and serve.

The Irish Council of Churches meets the public benefit requirement in two ways:

##### **1. The advancement of religion:**

The formal ecumenical body in Ireland, established in 1922, its current membership reflects the changing landscape of Christianity in Ireland across Protestant, Orthodox, Reformed, Independent and Migrant-led churches. Since 1973 it has coordinated the Irish Inter-Church Meeting, a formal dialogue between the Irish Council of Churches and the Irish Episcopal Conference. Together, the Council and the Meeting bring together senior leaders representing the majority of Christian traditions in Ireland. Member churches express their Christian witness working together for the benefit of all peoples, in Northern Ireland and internationally. The direct benefits which flow from this purpose include the ability of member churches to work together to raise awareness and understanding of their religious beliefs and practices. The Irish Council of Churches provides an opportunity for member churches to better understand each other; promoting co-operation, joint working, and greater efficiency. The direct benefits are demonstrated through regular evaluation of the Irish Council of Churches' services and activities and through feedback from representatives of each of the member churches. The Irish Council of Churches is accountable to all its member churches and its work is reported to their governing bodies. This purpose does not lead to harm. The beneficiaries of this purpose are the member churches of the Irish Council of Churches. The beneficiaries also include the public generally in Northern Ireland specifically those involved in or associated with the Christian faith. There is no private benefit.

##### **2. Through reconciliation and the promoting of religious harmony:**

The Irish Council of Churches enables churches to work together to promote reconciliation across the historic political, social, ethnic and religious divides in Northern Ireland and through the island of Ireland. The direct benefits which flow from this purpose include the promotion of political, social, ethnic and religious harmony by promoting good relations between people of different Christian traditions, building cooperation and understanding, and sharing information with the general public. This purpose does not lead to harm. The beneficiaries of this purpose are the public generally in Northern Ireland especially those who look to their church and the Irish Council of Churches to provide guidance on how they should treat others in society. There is no private benefit.

# IRISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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The Trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the charity should undertake.

#### **Achievements and performance**

##### **Principal Activities**

Key activities of the Irish Council of Churches include:

Formally bringing together senior representatives from across our member churches to meet, dialogue and plan activities of mutual concern, at least quarterly.

Promoting reconciliation across historic political, social, ethnic, and religious divides.

Facilitating joint co-operation through our liaison groups, enabling collaboration, co-operation and the sharing of information by bringing together representatives with specific responsibilities for a wide variety of aspects of the mission and ministry of our members.

Coordinating working groups which advise on topics of mutual concern, bringing together nominated experts representative of the diversity of views expressed by our members.

Enabling dialogue, sharing and joint action with the Irish Episcopal Conference through the Irish Inter-Church Meeting, representatives of which meet at least quarterly.

Highlighting the work of member churches before each other and the wider public in Ireland through disseminating resources, aggregating news on our website, sharing information on initiatives and communicating joint statements.

Engaging with government and civil society on issues of mutual concern and advocating on public policy issues, as requested by our members, for the benefit of society at large.

Working with our member churches on externally funded projects which fulfil our charitable purposes. Assisting the churches in relating to newer migrant-led churches and building informal relationships with leaders of other faiths.

Working closely with other national and international ecumenical bodies, particularly those established to work in England, Scotland and Wales, as well as Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.

Representing the member churches at keynote public events, including supporting joint public worship. Exploring the ongoing development of our networks to achieve our purposes.

Full details of Council activities are available at: [www.irishchurches.org](http://www.irishchurches.org).

# IRISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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#### Financial review

The accounts for the year show a surplus of £128,713. This includes a gain, of £124,669, on the disposal of 48 Elmwood Avenue, Belfast, the Council's former offices, giving an operating surplus of £4,044 (2023; deficit of £19,153). This compares to a budgeted deficit of £7,974 and one of the main reasons for this is a saving in staffing costs.

Contributions from Member Church's and the Irish Episcopal Conference increased from £116,490 to £122,247, reflecting a 5% increase on the previous year, and the Trustees are grateful for their continued support and commitment to the work that is done together through Irish Council of Churches (ICC) and Irish Inter Church Meeting (IICM).

The Trustees are also grateful for the financial support received toward the work of its Good Relations Officer. In 2024, funding amounting to £42,664 was received, while staffing and other costs totalled £39,060. Programme expenses were lower than expected and are projected for 2025.

Net proceeds on the sale of 48 Elmwood Avenue have been allocated to a designated Building Fund pending a decision about future premises for ICC's activities. In the interim the Council has re-located to Suite 1, Talbot Street, St Annes Cathedral.

Total reserves increased from £526,144 as at 31 December 2023 to £654,857 as at 31 December 2024 and are mainly represented by bank balances.

Thanks are due to the members of the Joint Management Committee, who oversee the day-to-day affairs of the Council and to the ICC Executive and Irish Inter Church Committee for their support and careful attention to matters of finance and governance during the year, as well as the staff team for their ongoing diligence and commitment in pursuing the mission of ICC and IICM.

The Trustees acknowledge the significant contribution of Dr Damian Jackson, who resigned from his role as General Secretary at the end of 2024 and now look forward to the leadership of Rev Dr Karen Campbell who assumed the role in March 2025.

Member church subscriptions will increase by 3.5% in 2025, ensuring ICC and IICM maintain a strong financial footing.

The Trustees are satisfied with the financial position of ICC and IICM at the end of 2024.

#### Going concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the Trustees have a reasonable expectation that the Charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the accounting policies.

#### Reserves policy

It is the policy of the charity that unrestricted funds which have not been designated for a specific use should be maintained at a level equivalent to between three and six month's expenditure. The Trustees consider that reserves at this level will ensure that, in the event of a significant drop in funding, they will be able to continue the charity's current activities while consideration is given to ways in which additional funds may be raised. This level of reserves has been maintained throughout the year.

# IRISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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#### Structure, governance and management

Irish Council of Churches is a registered charity, number NIC102643, and is constituted under a Trust deed.

The Trustees who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Rt Rev Sarah Groves

Very Rev Dr Charles McMullen (Appointed 11/04/24)

Mr Clive Knox (Appointed 03/09/2024)

Mr William Hunter

Most Senior Apostle Olusola Obube

Rt Rev Andrew Forster

Ms Georgina Copt

Dr Bridget Nichols

Rev Canon Dr Daniel Nuzum

Mr George Sayegh

Fr Anish John

Ms Yvonne Langebach

Rev Brian Anderson

Ms Gillian Kingston

Rev Dr Heather Morris

Mr Mark Kernohan

Rt Rev Colin Campbell

Very Rev Dr Ivan Patterson (Resigned 11/04/24)

Rev Helen Freeburn

Rev Trevor Gribben

Rev Barry McCroskery

Pastor Tunde Adebayo-Oke

James Nelson

Fr Calin Florea

Colonel Neil Webb (Resigned 10/09/24)

Captain Marion Rouffet (Appointed 11/09/24)

Fr Dr Jobymon Skaria

The management of the Charity is the responsibility of the Trustees who are elected and co-opted under the terms of the Trust deed.

#### Funds held as custodian trustee

No funds are held as custodian on behalf of others.

The Trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.

20<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Rt Rev S Groves

Trustee

Date: .....

Sarah Groves