

GRACE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH LTD.

Company number: NI626500

CCNI number: 102877

Registered office: 11 Clanwilliams Cottages, Ballynahinch, BT24 8XN

Period of review: 1 Jan 2023 – 31 Dec 2023

Church Meetings

- An Annual General Meeting was held on 18th May 2023
- The Half-Yearly meeting was held on 30th November 2023

Trustees

During this period the following changes in Trustees took place:

- Malcolm Johnston stepped down from his role as a Trustee in May 2023 and we wish to record our thanks to Malcolm for his significant contribution to leadership at Grace Fellowship, and in particular, his knowledge and experience in leading the necessary changes to governance structures.
- Vanessa Goucher and David Taylor were appointed as Trustees

Current at year end: Doug Jarvie, Vanessa Goucher, David Taylor, Dale Gordon (Chair)

The Trustees delegate a substantial part of the leading and guiding of the activity of the church to the Grace Leadership Team (GLT).

Leadership Team (GLT)

Current at year end:

Doug Jarvie, Lorna Dunn (co-option), Karen Hewitt, Paul Coles, Ali Brown.

Continuing to serve as staff in the period were:

Ali Brown (Pastor – Community), Paul Coles (Pastor – Church) and Josh Johnston-Wood (Youth Pastor).

Over the year both the Trustees and GLT have been consistently considering how to add to the leadership group. A number of people have been approached but, for various valid reasons, have been unable to step into a leadership role this year. However, we are hopeful that we will be able to add to our leadership number in 2024 and would continue to encourage the fellowship to share their thoughts about potential leaders, both for now and for the longer term.

Members and attendees

As at end December 2023, there are 94 members. Currently, approximately 200 adults, 30 youth and 75 children are connected to Grace Fellowship, with upwards of 200+ people on any given Sunday.

We wish God's blessing on 3 people who have resigned their membership this year, and upon 4 new members during this time

In 2023, we had the immense joy of baptising 7 people: Eva, Eve, Eoin, Abigail, Rebekah, Abbie & Lucy

We also continue to mourn the loss of valued members of our wider church family who have gone to be with their Lord and Saviour during the year:

- Grant Johnston-Wood
- Tom McCorry
- Brenda Hunter

We also want to acknowledge and thank the many people from within the church family who volunteer across all the ministry areas of Grace Fellowship. The church would not function without your willingness and commitment.

Trustees' Work

During the year, the Trustees continued their role in monitoring and implementing the key policies and procedures required for Governance, HR and Finance, as well as fulfilling the legal requirements of Grace Fellowship Church Ltd. as a limited company and charity.

Two significant items of work were completed during the year,

1. completion of the HR policies & procedures and staff handbook, and,
2. the revised Articles of Association (endorsed by the members at the 2023 AGM and approved by the Charities Commission)

The Trustees continue to be guided by the governing responsibilities of the Articles of Association of the Company. The Trustees are satisfied that the activity of the church in the period has been consistent with our stated objectives and continue to have regard to the requirements of the Charity Commission for the orderly operating of the Company.

In October 2023 the GLT and Trustees met for a day of discussion, prayer, listening to God and reflection, facilitated by Andy Hewitt. It was great to be able to take this time getting to know one another and discussing how to work together better, as well as listening to God and caring for one another.

Grace Fellowship Church Vision and Principles

The Vision of the church remains central to all that we do. Leadership seeks to ensure that all our work flows from the vision and contributes to realising it: Pursuing the Glory of God, and Proclaiming the Good News of Jesus, for the Renewal and Transformation of lives.

The four core values of the church remain:

- We depend upon God
 - to reveal truth to us by His Spirit as we commit to follow where God leads and aspire to grow in our knowledge and love of Him.
- We are a community of Grace

- we seek to follow Christ's example of love, acceptance and forgiveness, freely available to all, without exception.
- We reach out in love
 - to bring the life changing Hope of Christ to the world and to serve God by serving others with our time and resources.
- We are committed to each other
 - as we demonstrate love for each other in word and action, and foster unity while recognising the diversity within the body of Christ.

2023 saw us return to a level of 'normality' as Covid-19 lessened in its impact on our meeting as a church body and associated activities.

We are encouraged that approximately 100 people in the Grace Community are involved with, or connected to, a home group – something we view as a vital aspect of our journey together as a church.

In late 2023 a CARE team was initiated. Co-ordinated by Karen Hewitt and Paul Coles, this team provide a means to give each family connected to Grace Fellowship a point of contact for care issues.

Community

Grace Fellowship continues to partner with Ballynahinch Churches Together and other organisations to help those in need in our community and to bring love, hope and connection. Collaboration with other local churches happens particularly during special times of the year, such as Christmas and Easter Holy Week when there are shared services, and also in the support for Ukrainian refugees and the weekly Interchurch prayer meeting online. Grace Fellowship is also grateful for the use of local churches for larger events; particularly funerals.

The organisations shared with other churches include Christians Against Poverty (CAP) Debt Centre, Life Skills course, The Edge Youth and Community Centre, Ballynahinch Counselling, Alpha, Alpha Youth (in Assumption school) and the Ballynahinch Food Bank (the last Sunday of every month in Grace Fellowship is set aside as a time for donations to the foodbank).

At both Easter and Christmas teams from Grace Fellowship contacted around 400 homes in our local community and distributed gifts. They were encouraged by the welcome they received and conversations that were had.

Mission week in August, led by The Edge team, again provided an opportunity for many of our young people to share the gospel with their friends and the local community and was a real time of blessing and spiritual growth.

Youth & Children

The number of young people and children connected to Grace Fellowship continues to grow. Whilst this is something we praise God for and to be excited about, it also brings challenges – whether that be having enough room at Space4Grace or enough volunteers to cover GRACE Kids and Creche.

In 2023, upwards of 40 young people were linked with GRACE Youth at the Friday night meetings and the Youth weekend, as well as attending the Youth Together (joint churches monthly gathering). The young people also volunteered at Mission Week and some are involved weekly at The Edge.

On Sunday mornings there can be 50+ children at GRACE Kids and Creche – and a special mention and our sincere thanks goes out to the teachers and volunteers who give up their mornings to invest in our children.

Teaching Ministry

The biblical teaching series for 2023 were as follows ...

- January: Pursuing God, Proclaiming Jesus, Transforming Lives in 2023
- February, March: Colossians – “Jesus Over Everything”
- April, May, June: Revelation – letters to the Seven churches
- July, August: “RIGHT SIDE UP”
- September: A call to make space for the voice and presence of God in our lives
- October, November: “The Ancient and Everyday”
- December: Advent Journey

On Sunday mornings we were also blessed with the ministry of Pastor Oleg (Ukraine) and Aaron Molesky (Journey Church), our Ukraine family and GRACE kids. Ali, Stephen and Ian gave a report on their visit with Ali Dini to Serbia and Bulgaria and we had special services highlighting climate change, Christians Against Poverty (CAP), also day for a family BBQ!

Small Groups

The home groups continue to be a vital aspect of the church community; allowing for ministry in smaller groups reflecting the teaching programme, but also providing connection, relationship and pastoral support. Approximately 50% of the fellowship are connected to a small group.

During January to March 2023 there were specific small groups set up to study wider Christian issues. The “Digging Deeper” initiative included groups looking at ‘Christianity & Climate Change’; ‘Jesus, Sex and Gender’; ‘Re-exploring Christianity’ and ‘Understanding Spiritual Gifts’. The feedback was very positive and the ‘Christianity & Climate Change’ group subsequently ran two successful events reaching into the community to swap clothes and toys.

It is intended to repeat the “Digging Deeper” format in 2024 with topics including, ‘Unanswered Prayer’, ‘Jesus, Sex and Gender’, ‘Exploring Biblical Prophecy’ and ‘Exploring the Book of Revelation’.

In addition to the above, “Common Threads” and “Women who Yarn” meet regularly for women in the fellowship and the “Band of Brothers” organises men’s events.

“Wildfires” is a time of worship in Space for Grace meeting regularly on Sunday nights.

GO - Grace Outreach team

Our GO (Grace Outreach) Team leads our vision to reach out overseas and leads our involvement and support (both prayerfully and financially) in many projects locally and around the world.

Locally, projects supported in 2023 included, The EDGE, CAP Debt Centre and Lifeskills course. We also continued to support 9 members and friends of the fellowship working in the Republic of Ireland, Brazil, Honduras, USA (and globally with Farsi speakers), Bulgaria, Serbia, Moldova and Romania.

Money donated to the work of Grace Fellowship by its members, attendees and stakeholders has been disbursed in a way that reflects the vision and values of the church.

Ukraine community

In 2023 the church has continued to be blessed by our Ukrainian brothers and sisters who have fled the war and have chosen to live in and around Ballynahinch, and endeavour to help them connect with our church services through translation services.

As a fellowship, we were moved and blessed deeply one Sunday morning as our Ukrainian brothers and sisters shared their stories and sang to us.

Tobar community

Grace Fellowship's connection with the Tobar network of churches has continued in 2023. Many attended and were blessed again by the NUA festival in June and the Tobar Leaders' conference in September. The pastors continue to be supported by this network and Paul is on the 'Lead Team' of Tobar.

Premises

The church continues to use the premises of St Colman's High School and Sixth Form College. We are very grateful to the Principal, Jennifer King, and the Board of Governors for the use of their premises each Sunday and to the caretaker for being available. Smaller groups continue to meet in Space for Grace during the week.

As our community continues to grow, especially the numbers coming on Sunday mornings, the leadership are mindful of the space requirements and are prayerfully considering alternative options which may be open to us as a fellowship.

Finance

The unrestricted funds for Grace Fellowship Church Ltd, during 2023 increased from £31,556 to £46,139

2023 also saw an increase in income, and the leadership are thankful to the fellowship for the sacrificial giving which has helped us fund the expenditure required to expand our activities and ministries in line with our Vision.

It also should be noted that, in line with our core value of reaching out in love, around 40% of our expenditure continues to be directed toward outreach projects in our local community and around the world.

An Independent Examination of the Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023 is again being carried out by David Lyttle & Co, Chartered Accountants. The Trustees are satisfied with the financial management and robustness of the Company.

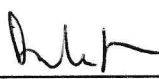
Conclusion

We commend this report to you as a record of 2023. We are continually thankful to God for His leading and guidance during 2023. As we move into 2024 and prepare to celebrate 10 years as a church fellowship, we are confident that God will continue to lead us forward into more opportunities to serve Him, grow in Him and to be a blessing to our local community.

Signed on behalf of Grace Fellowship Trustees:



Mr D R Gordon



Mr J D Jarvie