

# **Grace Fellowship Church Ltd.**

## **Directors' (Trustees') Report 2024**

Company number: NI626500

CCNI number: 102877

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

Period of review: 1 Jan 2024-31<sup>st</sup> December 2024

### **Trustees – Directors of Grace Fellowship Church Limited**

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).

### **Church Meetings**

- An Annual General Meeting was held on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2024
- The Half-Yearly meeting was held on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2024
- This report will be presented at the 2025 AGM 4<sup>th</sup> June 2025

There were two extraordinary General meetings during the year to ratify new staff and leadership appointments.

### **Leadership Team (GLT)**

During this period the following changes in Leaders took place:

- Doug Jarvie stepped down as a leader in December 2024, having served for six years. His commitment to the leadership team, particularly in the overlapping role of leader and trustee has been considerable and we wish to record our thanks for that, particularly in the area of financial expertise.
- Karen Hewitt stepped down as a leader in December 2024 due to the increased pressure from work and family commitments. The Trustees acknowledge the great work Karen has done in this role and trust that in her role as pastor she will continue to know the guidance and leading of the Lord.
- Lorna Dunn and Merve Jones were selected as leaders and endorsed by the membership at AGM in June 2024.

GLT as at year end:

- Lorna Dunn, Merve Jones, Paul Coles, Ali Brown.

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, and in April 2025 Josh Johnston-Wood and Michael Clarke joined GLT.

### **Staff Team**

Continuing to serve as staff in the period were:

- Ali Brown (Pastor – Community), Paul Coles (Pastor – Church) and Josh Johnston-Wood (Youth Pastor)
- Newly-appointed in March 2024 as Pastor (Pastoral Care)- Karen Hewitt,

### **Members and attendees**

As at end December 2024, there were 96 members. Currently, approximately 200 adults, 30 youth and 75 children are connected to Grace Fellowship, with upwards of 220+ people on any given Sunday. It would be good to

increase membership to be able to have a bigger group of people reflecting the growing size of the fellowship and to call on for major decisions and discussion.

We wish God's blessing on those who have resigned their membership this year:  
- Donald Patterson & Hannah Cunningham

We welcome those who have joined:  
- Emma Taylor, Karen Fulton, Glenn Christie, Richard & Charlotte Maine

In 2024, we had the immense joy of baptizing Andrew, Ben, Dima, Jamie, Lily, Luke, Matt, Molly, Naomi & Nikita

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: Maisie Dunlop

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.

In line with the HR role in the Staffing policy, there have been two cycles of appraisal and supervision carried out for the paid members of staff.

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.

On 9<sup>th</sup> November 2024, the GLT and Trustees met for a day of discussion, prayer, listening to God and reflection. This was an important opportunity to be able to take time getting to know one another and discussing key issues for the fellowship, as well as listening to God for guidance for the future.

### **Grace Fellowship Church Vision and Principles**

The Vision of the church remains central to all that we do. Leadership seeks to ensure that all that we do 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.

We are encouraged that approximately 120 people in the Grace Community are involved with, or connected to, a small group – something we view as a vital aspect of our journey together as a church.

The CARE team has continued to work through 2024 as a valuable pastoral initiative co-ordinated by Karen Hewitt and Paul Coles. This growing team provide a means to give each family connected to Grace Fellowship a point of contact for care issues. Gillian Barr was invited to work with the group on how to handle difficult issues.

The Intercessory Prayer Team have been actively engaged all year in praying for the identified needs of the Fellowship and have been blessed abundantly with answered prayer.

### **Anniversary**

We celebrated 10 years of Grace Fellowship Church in 2024. We remembered the challenging circumstances that we were birthed out of, and we celebrated the growth in our church family and the growing unity of churches in Ballynahinch. We are so thankful for the grace of God in our church family and throughout Ballynahinch and County Down that has allowed us to see growing and healthy community, experience lives encouraged and transformed and be part of God's ongoing story in our local area and beyond.

### **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 when there are shared services. We also partner 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 weddings and funerals.

Café Church, described in more detail below, emerged largely from various community ministries of Grace Fellowship.

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. We are so thankful for the partnership of other churches in the town for this project and for the generosity of Edengrove Presbyterian for the use of their premises for the week.

### **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 2024, upwards of 40 young people were linked with Grace Youth at the Friday night meetings and 30 young people attended our Youth weekend at Castlewellan Castle.

As well as this the Youth Together (joint churches monthly gathering) saw regular attendance of 40+ young people from across the churches of Ballynahinch, Spa, and Magherahamlet.

Some 20+ of our young people also volunteered at Mission Week and half a dozen are involved weekly at The Edge.

On Sunday mornings there can be over 50 children at Grace Kids and Creche.

Our sincere thanks goes out to the teachers, helpers, youth leaders, and volunteers who give up their mornings, evenings and even weekends to invest in our children and young people.

### **Teaching Ministry**

The biblical teaching series for 2024 were as follows ...

- January: Pursuing God, Proclaiming Jesus, Transforming Lives in 2024
- January to March: The manifesto (The Sermon on the Mount)
- April to June: Lessons from the Life of Peter
- July and August: Stories & Psalms
- September to December: Exodus – The Rescue

On Sunday mornings we were also blessed with the ministry of Pastor Firouz, Neil Alexander (from Centre 61), and to have life stories and scripture lessons from many members of our Grace family. We are incredibly blessed to have so many valuable and Godly voices in our church family.

### **Small Groups**

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. More than 50% of the fellowship are connected to a small group.

During March to June 2024 there were specific small groups set up to study wider Christian issues. The "Digging Deeper" initiative included groups looking at 'Jesus, Sex and Gender'; 'The Book of Revelation', Reframing the Prophetic', and 'Unanswered Prayer'.

In addition to the above, "Common Threads" and "Women who Yarn" meet regularly for women in the fellowship and the "Band of Brothers" which has grown significantly this year as a group of men who meet regularly for coffee and organized events.

There have been new pastoral groups organized by Karen for new mums, for women on their own and other connections. There are plans to run a Bereavement Journey course through 2025.

"Wildfires" is a time of worship in Space for Grace meeting monthly on Sunday nights.

On an average Thursday night at Café Church around sixteen people attend. We sing one worship song, listen to one another's needs for/answers to prayer, do a short Bible study, and take part in group discussion. The group has become a support network where people share their joys and sorrows.

20-30 men from Grace get together for 5-a-side football every Wednesday evening.

### **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 2024 included, The EDGE, CAP Debt Centre and the CAP Lifeskills course. We also continued to support 11 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 2024 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.

### **Tobar community**

Grace Fellowship's connection with the Tobar network of churches has continued in 2024. 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 Coles serves on the 'Lead Team' of Tobar.

### **Premises- update**

Each Sunday 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 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 continuing to prayerfully consider alternative options which may be open to us as a fellowship.

### **Finance**

The unrestricted funds for Grace Fellowship Church Ltd, during 2024 increased from £46,139 to £63,130.

2024 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 2024 is again being carried out by David Lytle & Co, Chartered Accountants. The Trustees are satisfied with the financial management and robustness of the Company.

### **Reserves level**

The Trustees continue to review and monitor the reserves of the Company. This encompasses the nature of income and expenditure streams, the need to match variable income with fixed commitments and the nature of the reserves. To enable the efficient and effective management of the charity the directors have determined that free reserves at a level in excess of three months operating costs should be held. At the year end free reserves was considered to be adequate.

### **Trustees' Responsibilities**

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

Company law requires company directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the directors have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law). Under company law the directors must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a

true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure of the company for that period.

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

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102);
- make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and the group and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

### Conclusion

We commend this report to you as a record of 2024. We are continually thankful to God for His leading and guidance during 2024. As we move into 2025 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:



Vanessa Goucher



Doug Jarvie