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St. Mark's Parish Church
Annual report and financial statements
For the year ended 31 December 2024

Charities Number: 103350

St. Mark's Parish Church

Annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

Contents

	<u>Pages</u>
Legal and Administrative Details	3
Trustees' Annual Report	4 - 8
Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees	9
Statement of Financial Activities	10
Balance Sheet	11
Notes to the Financial Statements	12-19

St. Mark's Parish Church

Annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

Legal and Administrative Details

Charity Name:	St. Mark's Parish Church Down & Dromore, Church of Ireland	
Charity Number:	103350	
Contact Address:	Parish Office Church Street Newtownards BT23 4AN	
Trustees during the year:	Rev Peter Hilton Rev Stephen Doherty Mrs Elizabeth McMullan Mrs Lorraine McCullough Mrs Alison Cochrane Mr Tom Quinn Mr William McCrossan Mrs Anne Drysdale Mrs Hilary Stephens Mr Nicholas McKimm	Mr Tim Reid Mrs Cathy Allen Mrs Debbie Phillips Mr Michael O'Brien Mrs Beth Campbell Mr Richard Hunter Mrs Emma Gordon Mr Keith Porter Mrs Ruth Morrison
Principle Office Bearers during the year:	Clergy:	Rev P Hilton Rev S Doherty
	Church Treasurer:	Mrs D Phillips
	Church Secretary:	Mrs E McMullan
Independent Examiner	Guardian Chartered Accountants 2 William Street Newtownards BT23 4AH	
Bankers:	Danske Bank Belfast Business Centre PO Box 183 Donegal Square West Belfast BT1 6JS	

St Mark's Parish Church

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2024

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

Principal objectives and activities

Objects

The charitable purpose of the Church of Ireland is the advancement of religion.

The principal function of St Mark's Parish Church, Newtownards is the advancement of the Christian religion 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 the practical delivery of the benefits of Christianity. All functions of the Parish relate to the advancement of religion through holding regular worship and communicating with and caring for parishioners and others in the community.

As a result of activity in the pursuit of the advancement of the Christian religion St Mark's Parish Church has custody of property and of records, materials and artefacts of significance to cultural and religious heritage and maintenance of which is undertaken by the Select Vestry (Board of Trustees) of St Mark's Parish Church Newtownards.

Activities

St Mark's Parish Church, Newtownards seeks to provide a variety of opportunities for worship and prayer that are open to all sections of the community. Our church is a multi-site church family which include St Mark's Church, Glen Community Church (GCC) and West Winds Community Church (WWCC).

At St Marks we offer morning and evening worship on Sundays and a mid-week service on Wednesdays. The church building is open every day for private prayer and reflection.

One of our diocesan readers continues to assist with church services, baptisms and funerals in the Ardkeen Parish Church.

In St Marks weekly Sunday worship takes place at 9am, 11am and 6pm. A robed choir sing at the 11am service with the director of music leading on piano and organ. The choir also sing at special seasonal services and at civic events. There has been a continuing increase in numbers attending services. The morning service is shared on YouTube. Tea and coffee are provided after the morning church service in the Parish Centre with willing volunteers providing the refreshments. Seasonal lunches are provided and money raised donated to charity projects.

Pastoral care is major part of our charitable activities. During this time of vacancy, the curate assistant initially continued to provide support leading with church services, and supporting younger parishioners and their families. The diocese provided support with an additional member of clergy offering pastoral support and also from the Area Dean and the Archdeacon. We then saw the curate and his family move way as he applied and was successfully appointed as Rector to another parish.

The diocese then provided another member of clergy who covers some services and visits parishioners, the elderly and the sick, at home and in hospitals and nursing homes.

Visits are made and preparation time for those who bring children for baptism or for those who come as adults for baptism. Wedding preparation is provided by the clergy. Appointed clergy ensure that funeral services are conducted in the church or at an alternative venue as requested by the family.

A catering group made up of church members willingly provide and serve refreshments when requested by families following a funeral or after a wedding ceremony.

The Sunday School meets Sunday mornings with 3 groups meeting with different age groups. None of this could be done without our growing number of willing volunteers.

The Youth Fellowship for young people aged Primary 6 to year 10, meet Sunday evening 6.30 – 8pm with an epilogue, games, food and special social activities. All assisted with volunteers who are able to take the lead.

Members of the church congregation regularly help in the leading of the church services; we have a Diocesan Reader and 2 commissioned Parish readers. There is a diocesan evangelist who works part-time in the diocesan office and volunteers with the youth of St Marks. The diocesan evangelist who was in training at the Glen Community Church was commissioned and is now the church plant leader. The further development of the lay people continues and is important to our church family.

Reaching out to the Community (ROC) is a food bank where dry and tinned foodstuffs are donated by church members and local residents. Food parcels are delivered monthly to identified families in the wider community. We have seen an increased need for help from the foodbank and monthly deliveries in person help us to build relationships in the community.

We continually seek to extend our outreach to all age groups within our parish boundary which takes in most of the west end of Newtownards, including the town centre.

St Mark's Church and Parish Centre provide a venue for a range of community groups to meet, including the Health and Social Care Trust, a range of groups from the Scouting and Guiding Associations are associated with St Mark's and meet in the Parish Centre to provide associated benefit to children and young people. These groups are involved in church worship.

There is a range of groups and activities;

- A weekly group for carers.
- A midweek opportunity for parishioners, friends and members of the public, especially those who live alone or are isolated, to enjoy a cup of tea, food and a chat.
- Chest Heart and Stroke Group meet weekly
- Macular Society Support Group meets monthly
- A Bocha Group meets weekly

We have a social media presence (Facebook, YouTube) and a website. The weekly service sheet includes details on church services for the following week. An email is sent to keep parishioners advised of what is happening in the church and community.

St Mark's Parish Church offers activities for youth and young people, carried out under the requirements of the Church of Ireland's Child Safeguarding Policy.

There is a weekly drop-in group for adults with special needs meet and enjoy social activity. This is supported by Mencap and St Marks volunteers.

The Mother's Union meet monthly and place value on the family in its many forms as a source of love and support for individuals and the basis for a caring community. They are an active group of women who organise coffee mornings and have introduced a weekly activity called Craft and Craic. All of this is done within the community to promote family values.

The Bowling Club is an active group of men and women who play bowls each Thursday evening and take part in competitions.

We have strong links with local schools and appoint Transferor Representative Governors to several Boards. There they take an active part in the running of the school community thus fostering links between the school and church communities.

Several schools hold their annual carol services in St Mark's church, bringing parents, families and members of the school communities into church as well as being an important feature of the life of these schools.

St Mark's also supports Christian Mission through individual agencies working at home and overseas. In some instances, support is given where possible on an ecumenical basis e.g., through Newtownards Christian Aid committee, and the Link Family & Community Centre. The St Mark's Christian Aid leaders assist with volunteers from St Marks with annual collections in the town and host a yearly quiz to raise much needed funds. An annual fundraising lunch is now organised to help raise awareness and much needed funds.

The yearly self-denial Lenten lunch, hosted by the St Marks prayer meeting attendees, is a time for people to get together and share a light meal with monies raised going to an identified charity and this year this was donated to Open Doors.

In November we had a Christmas Fair which was well supported by the local community. This included volunteers from The Glen Community church and the West Winds Community Church assisting with stalls and catering.

St Mark's Parish Church holds a special place in the local community as building of historical interest with links to the Londonderry family. The church is open every day and has been used as a venue for history walks. There is a booklet on the history of the church provided free of charge.

The church provides access to archive records (births deaths and marriages) for genealogical research.

We believe that our activities have been instrumental in maintaining and developing the lives of our members to the benefit of the community of which we are part.

St Mark's Parish Church Newtownards would not be able to deliver the quality of welcome and fellowship without the many hours of voluntary service given by many volunteers in all aspects of church life.

In order to strategically develop our outreach activities in Newtownards, the congregation of St Mark's has planted two churches, making us a multi-site church. These two church plants serve two of the three largest social housing estates in the town. The Glen estate has approximately 500 households and the West Winds some 1200 households, with each estate remaining within the top 100 small pockets of deprivation in Northern Ireland (NI Census 2021).

The Glen Community Church (GCC) was launched in 2014 and is led by an evangelist and supervised by an Ordained Local Minister, (OLM) There is many activities provided for children and other age groups all lead by willing volunteers.

West Winds Community Church (WWCC) is led by the Ordained Local Minister and was launched during the summer of 2021. There are willing volunteers to help with Sunday worship and weekly activities for all ages.

During this year the Ordained Local Minister was unwell and the Trustee Personnel Committee made regular contact with support from the diocese. The GCC leader along with volunteers ensured church worship and other activities continued. We look forward to the return of the OLM.

Busy Sunday mornings in both church plants witness a growing gathering of local people coming together in their respective community venues for a time of informal café style worship and a warm welcome over refreshments, allowing time for fellowship.

At WWCC, a monthly ministry on a Sunday afternoon, forget me not church worship, is where the focus is on residents with dementia and their family and friends can attend... Traditional hymns, a short message, an engaging craft activity and a bible promise are the format of this special service.

Funding applications continue to be submitted and monies received from various organisation e.g. Orphans and Widows, Mother's Union etc help these growing churches provide activities to all age groups.

GCC has a Men's Shed that allows men of all ages to come along and learn new skills but also to have the time to chat over a cup of tea. This is so important for their social skills and mental health.

A Knit and Natter group allows, mainly women to come along and have a chat and knit or do craft activities.

The WWCC has a Men's Cave where men can gather and have a chat and play games

The Hen's Shed encourages women of all ages to come along learn new skills, enjoy crafts and chat together.

The Community Associations in each estate are very supportive in offering facilities and funding.

Continuing discipleship includes

- **Bible Study Groups** - each week, the church families in St Marks, the GCC and WWCC have their respective bible study groups, encouraging participants to deepen their faith.

- **Discipleship Courses** - each of the church families host discipleship courses at various times throughout the year including Alpha, Christianity Explored, Grief Course, etc.
- **Prayer Gatherings** - takes place in St Mark's, The Glen and West Winds, each with a passionate group of parishioners with prayerful hearts.
- **Children** - each of our worship family sites host Sunday School provision for primary aged children.
- **Youth** - St Mark's Youth Fellowship meets every week with The Glen and The West Winds engaging with young people from their respective communities.

Achievements and Performance in our 3 church sites

- Outreach into the community of Newtownards.
- Cross Community Events.
- Lunch time clubs
- Men's Shed and Hens Shed
- Giving to Missions and other charities.
- Continual development of the Glen Community Church and West Winds Community Church
- Select Vestry (Trustees) meetings took place
- Ongoing building work and repairs in the church and parish centre.
- The Rectory has required refurbishment and this work is progressing under the guidance of the Glebes. A loan continues to be paid to pay for part of the purchase of this house.
- Christian resources are available in the parish centre foyer for people to take with them.
- A television screen is in the parish centre hallway and displays details of services and other activities in the church
- Much work has gone into ensuring that as an organisation we are environmentally aware, so we recycle and reuse.
- In the parish centre, LED lights are in place and timer switches used in areas well used.
- Holiday Bible Club in August 2024
- Bible study groups
- Prayer groups
- Grief Course

Vacancy

There remains a vacancy with the process of nomination to appoint a new Rector now with the bishop. We are fortunate to have others to minister to our church family and support this multi-site Church all under the guidance of the Archdeacon. We had additional support organised by the diocese with a visiting member of clergy meeting with parishioners and listening to their ideas.

Financial Review

Parishioners have continued to respond generously through their giving. The Parish centre has groups who make a donation and this has given us much needed revenue.

The Trustees are satisfied with the results of the charity during the year together with the financial position at 31 December 2024. The trustees have reviewed the budgets for the year ending 31 December 2025 and are satisfied that there are adequate funds going to be in place to ensure that the Parish continues its activities during the coming year and that the charity's assets are adequate to fulfil its obligations. At 31 December 2024 there was a net surplus of free funds of £135,299.

Principal sources of funding

- Freewill Offerings
- Direct Debits
- Standing Orders
- Gifts
- Legacies
- Grants

- Yearly Fair
- In-house catering

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing Document

The charity is governed by its Constitution which is logged with the Charities Commission.

Recruitment and Appointment of Board of Trustees

New trustees are elected by members of the church.

Elizabeth McMullan Date: 1st May 2025

Mrs Elizabeth McMullan (Trustee)

D E Phillip Date: 1st May 2025

Mrs Debra Phillips (Trustee)