

**Christ Church (Congregational) Abbots Cross**

**Trustees Annual Report**

**Period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023**

## **Trustees Annual Report**

**Charity** – Christ Church (Congregational) – also known as Abbots Cross Congregational

**NI charity reference** – NIC103423

**Principal address** – Christ Church (Congregational), Doagh Road, Newtownabbey, County Antrim, BT37 9QW.

### **Introduction**

This report covers the period **1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023**. Our registration as a charity was on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2016.

### **Structure**

The congregation at Abbots Cross is an unincorporated institution made up of all those who take up membership (non-members are known as adherents but do not have 'voting rights') and governed by a constitution. At 31<sup>st</sup> December we had 126 members.

Under the constitution there is provision for a leadership body appointed by the members and made up of the serving Minister (if one has been appointed) and Deacons. The serving Minister is generally regarded as the Chairperson, a Secretary and Treasurer are appointed from within the Diaconate and ratified by the members of the Congregation. At 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 there was not a serving minister and there were 6 men serving in the role of deacon.

The Annual Business Meeting at which amongst other reports, accounts are brought to the members is held in February each year, with subsequent Church Meetings in June, September and December. The congregation is also subject to the trusts placed upon it by a Trust Deed in which the property is also settled, under the requirements of the Trust Deed a number of persons have been appointed by and on behalf of the congregation as 'holding trustees' to hold legal title to the buildings in which the congregation meet and to the house used as the Minister's manse.

### **Objects**

Our Charitable Purposes are set out in the Covenant section of our constitution as follows:

**We engage therefore, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to maintain the worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the Church; the relief of the needy; the spread of the Gospel to all nations.**

These purposes are advanced by means of our weekly public services, outreach into the local community, organisations meeting in our premises, missionary interest and practical support.

## **Trustees**

For the purpose of charity law, the serving Minister and Deacons have the day-to-day role for the administration and management of the church on behalf of the members and are identified as the charity trustees. In January 2023 the serving Minister resigned after serving for 12 years. Deacons are elected for a period of 3 years and on retirement are eligible for re-election. Instead of all retiring at the same time, one third of the Deacons retire by rotation each year. During the period of this report the following persons served as charity trustees:

William Annette, Jeffrey Adair, Brian Bell, Samuel Carson, Andrew Cuthbert (until February 2023), Rev. Trevor Gillanders (until January 2023), Andrew Kirkpatrick (until March 2023), Thomas McLernon (until March 2023), Mark Thompson, David Walker.

The serving minister and deacons also have oversight of the **spiritual well-being** of the congregation. Spiritual well-being is provided by meeting together each week for corporate fellowship, worship and prayer. Our pastoral care includes visitation of those in hospital and or the housebound and we have strengthened our pastoral care capacity with the involvement of a retired Congregational minister which has been vital. While at the time of writing we do not have a serving minister, on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023 a Special Meeting of Church members voted to 'call' a new minister and Lord willing we look forward with great anticipation to seeing this process reach completion in 2024.

## **Public Benefit Statement**

The trustees confirm they have regard to the Commission's public benefit requirement. While the former Minister and 1 other former trustee received a salary and relevant expenses from the congregation, this was an incidental private benefit necessary to further our charitable purposes as set out in our purpose statement available to view on our registration page on the *Charity Commission for Northern Ireland* website.

As an evangelical congregation/denomination we seek to share and witness our Christian faith to the local community by inviting attendance at our weekly public services. We acknowledge the contribution of all those folk who take on the additional responsibility of organisation and or leadership in the following ministries:- Stepping Stones children's ministry, crèche, youth fellowship, Girls Brigade, Little Lambs (mums & tots), Boys Club, youth club, English class (for foreign nationals living in our local area), door to door visitation.

It has been very encouraging to have different nationalities joining with us, people who have come from other nations including India & Africa. All our church activities were in place during this year and our congregation remained very faithful in their attendance and participation.

## **Safeguarding**

The Trustees remain aware of the 'duty of care' to children. All persons working with children must be subject to an enhanced disclosure under current legislation and this applies to persons working in organisations associated with the church. Our safeguarding policy remains in place and at the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 there had not been any 'abuse' claims made, nor are we presently aware of any circumstances which might reasonably be expected to give rise to a claim for abuse.

## Financial Review

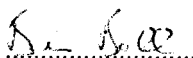
We must record sincere appreciation to our congregation (members and adherents) for their continuing support and this made it possible for us to meet our ongoing financial commitments. With several properties to maintain, during the year we have had to carry out a number of repair and maintenance projects.

A number of persons give their offerings under the Government's 'Gift Aid' scheme. Accounts are prepared on an income and expenditure basis and we will comply with the requirement to disclose and submit the information required in the Annual Monitoring Return and to publish our accounts in line with our understanding of CCNI guidance.

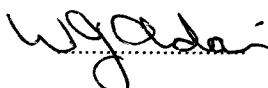
Our **gross income** for the year as reported here at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 in our No.1 account was **£140,539** with **expenditure** of **£125,667**. We maintain a close interest in 'missionary' endeavour at home and abroad and each week we donate at least 10% of weekly income to students and full time Christian workers approved by the Church (full Church members) and on each tenth Sunday give the entire offerings to other designated missionary work as disclosed in our accounts.

No.1 Account (balance 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023): **£61,961**.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:-



Trustee



Trustee

Dated:- 21/10/2024