



**Strand Presbyterian Church - a congregation of the
Presbyterian Church in Ireland**

**Trustees Annual Report
for the year ended 31 December 2024**

Registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC104314

Strand Presbyterian Church

161 Connsbrook Avenue

Belfast

BT5 1JY

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CHARITY TRUSTEES

The Charity Trustees who served during the year or who were trustees at the date of this report were

Rev Daniel Rankin	George Hampton	John Johnston
Samuel Kennedy	Patricia Cooper	Suzanne Howe
Robert Megahey	Graeme Hamilton	Harry Black
Martin Hampton	Susan Lilley	David Doggart
Rev Mervyn Burnside		

PRINCIPAL OFFICE BEARERS

Vacancy Convenor	Rev Mervyn Burnside (May 2024 – June 2025)
Minister	Rev Alan Marsh (June 2025 & current)
Clerk of Session	John Johnston
Treasurer	Martin Hampton

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Barbara Elaine Dempster

SOLICITORS

Peden & Reid
22 Calendar St
Belfast
BT1 5BU

BANKERS

Ulster Bank Ltd
Connswater Branch
Arches Retail Park
Belfast BT5 4AF

STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT

The Kirk Session

The charity trustees of the congregation are the members of its Kirk Session. Under the congregation's governing document, The Code, the book of the constitution and government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Kirk Session seeks to watch over and promote the spiritual interest of the congregation and of persons not connected with any congregation who are within its bounds. It ensures pastoral care is in place in the congregation and seeks to further the contribution of the church to Christian witness and service in the local community. The Kirk Session has delegated to its Congregational Committee the temporal affairs of the congregation including administering all funds and property belonging to the congregation. Members of the Kirk Session are ex-officio members of the Congregational Committee.

The Kirk Session consists of the ordained minister and the ruling elders of the congregation. All members are entitled to propose, speak and exercise equal votes at meetings, except that the moderator, the minister in active duty in the congregation, has no deliberative but only a casting vote.

Stated meetings of the Kirk Session are usually held on a monthly basis.

To be chosen for the office of the eldership in the congregation a person must be a voting member and a regular attendant of its ordinances. The selection of those proposed to be called to the office can be either by the congregation or the Kirk Session. Members are elected if they obtain two-thirds of votes cast.

Presbytery

Under the Presbyterian Church in Ireland form of governance the corporate oversight of a congregation is the responsibility of a Presbytery which superintends generally the spiritual and temporal affairs of the congregations assigned to it by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Strand Presbyterian Church has been assigned to the East Belfast Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The membership of the Presbytery consists mainly of active ministers of congregations assigned to it by the General Assembly, ministers who have retired from active duty and an elder appointed by the Kirk Session of the congregation.

The General Assembly

The General Assembly is the supreme court of the church, representing in one body the whole church and acting as its supreme legislative, administrative and judicial authority, in dealing with matters brought before it. The General Assembly is normally constituted during the first week in June for worship and to conduct its business. At the end of the business it is dissolved. The membership of the General

Assembly consists mainly of the active ministers of each congregation, retired ministers and a representative elder appointed by the Kirk Session of each congregation.

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

Strand Presbyterian Church is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, as a Reformed Church within the wider body of Christ, is grounded in the scriptures and exists to love and honour God through faith in His Son and by the power of His Spirit, and to enable her members to play their part in fulfilling God's mission to our world.

The Congregation's mission purpose is:

Acknowledging that God is sovereign in all things we aim, by the preaching of the word, by prayer and fellowship to train and motivate Christians to bear witness to Christ in Sydenham and elsewhere, through loving service and evangelism.

The congregation aims to live out its Mission and Vision as a family of God's people through the following areas of church life:

Worship & Prayer – to achieve vital and meaningful worship of God;

Discipleship – to grow together in knowledge of God, God's word and God's will;

Evangelism – to reach out actively and seek to bring others into the community of faith;

Fellowship & Pastoral care – to provide a supportive and caring ministry to one another;

Ministry – to proclaim God's love, by word and action; and

Resources – to develop and deploy our property and other resources in line with our mission and objectives.

ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

The congregation meets for worship every Sunday and visitors are welcome to join. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is observed on several occasions throughout the year and all those who have been baptised and who have made a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are admitted to the Lord's Supper. The congregation holds regular bible study meetings and has a wide range of activities & organisations including:

Sunday

- Sunday PALS – P1-P7
- Sunday Creche

Tuesday

- Badminton Club
- 1-2-3 Lunch Club (monthly)

Wednesday

- HOPE Club (for retired folk)
- Prayer Meeting

Thursday

- Parents and Toddlers
- Boys Brigade (Anchor Boys, Junior Section and Company Section)

In addition, we offer free tea and coffee every Monday. Wednesday and Friday morning, having registered as a 'Warm Welcome Space' and provide access to our halls for outside groups to use on a weekly basis:

These include:

- Breakfast Club and After Schools Care
- Mixed Fitness Classes

Several local charities and organisations also make use of our facilities on an ad hoc basis:

- Barnardos
- Eastside Partnership
- Queen's Island Male Voice Choir
- Angel Eyes
- Latin Link
- Lace Guild
- Belfast Health & Social Care Trust
- Belfast City Council
- Hollywood Arches Health Centre

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE*1-2-3 Lunch Club:*

This is a monthly Lunch Club for anyone 50+ to attend. Meeting on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, we meet at 1pm, for a 2-course lunch for a cost of £3.00 (Hence 1-2-3). We have regularly had 30-40 people attending from within the Sydenham Community each month. Following lockdown, this proved a popular attraction, bringing people back together safely for a meal.

Worship and prayer:

The congregation normally meets for worship every Sunday at 10.30am. During the week, we hold a prayer meeting and study the bible, providing the opportunity for members to meet together for fellowship, to study the scriptures and for a time of prayer.

As well as our regular services during the year we acknowledged God's gift of new life at sacraments of baptism and services of thanksgiving. We gave thanks for faithful service and sought to comfort those who had been bereaved during the year.

At 31st December 2024, there were 76 communicant members and 106 families connected with the congregation.

The average weekly attendance at morning worship sits at around is 55-60.

Rev Daniel Rankin retired from the Ministry on 30th April 2024

Pastoral Care

Members of the congregation who are unable to attend church due to illness or age are visited on a regular basis by the minister and elders.

Mission and Outreach

At a local level the congregation runs several organisations which are available to residents in the local area around Connsbrook Avenue. Details of the activities of the organisations can be found below, starting at page 11.

During the year we ran a Community Fun Day in August and a Community Christmas Fayre in November.

The congregation supports the United Appeal for Mission which is a central fund of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. This fund enables congregations to support the wider mission of the denomination and to do mission and outreach on a denominational basis beyond what the congregation could do on its own. The United Appeal Fund provides financial support for mission personnel at home and overseas, assists congregations with the deployment of locally based staff, enables church planting, provides grant support for the upkeep of church premises, assists with the running costs of Union Theological College, the Church's training college for ministry students, and financially supports congregations in the area of worship, discipleship, global mission, outreach, leadership and pastoral care.

The Congregation is represented on the Boards of several schools in the local area:

- Victoria Park Primary School
- Strandtown Primary School
- Ashfield Boys School
- Ashfield Girls School

In addition, The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has launched appeals to help with world crises, such as hurricane damage, tsunami damage etc... The congregation contributes financially to these appeals as and when called upon.

Presbytery

The congregation was represented at the regular meetings of Presbytery by our minister and one of the elders. In addition, one of our elders is an official for the Presbytery and also attends the meetings.

General Assembly

The minister and one of our elders are nominated to attend the annual meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in Assembly Buildings, normally held in Belfast in the month of June.

In addition, one of the members is an official of the General Assembly and attends independently from the congregation

Property

General upkeep of the church and Manse continue throughout the year. Regular scheduled maintenance of the fire alarm and the fire safety systems, and of the gas heating system has been completed.

Since the Minister's retirement, there has been a Survey of the manse, as is required when seeking to fill the vacancy. Some work has been completed and the rest will be completed, including redecoration, in time for the new incumbent.

Administration

We continue to maintain our church records using *Churchsuite*, a cloud hosted web-based church management system (<https://churchsuite.com/>) to keep track of our membership and record direct donations from members, utilising its Gift Aid claim facility direct to HMRC. Churchsuite assists us in adherence to GDPR, as a single source of membership data.

Organisations – Those listed below have been operating in 2024.

Sunday

- Sunday Creche

The church provides childcare facilities to allow parents with babies, both members and visitors, to attend the worship service.

- Sunday PALS – P1-P7

Children in the age range for primary school start out in the main worship service with their family, but then leave to have their own time together and be taught from the bible in an engaging manner.

Tuesday

- **Badminton Club**

Meeting on a Tuesday evening (7.30pm – 9.30pm), the club is not a competitive club (playing in a league) but plays for fun and we provide a relaxed social atmosphere for those who attend. Run by church members, the majority of those attending have no church connection. We charge £1 per week to cover expenses

Wednesday

- **HOPE Club (for retired folk)**

The Hope Club runs from 2.00pm to 3.00pm on the 2nd Wednesday of each month, and is open to anyone in the community. A programme for the year is developed and hosts a number of speakers on a range of subjects, with a couple of outings and a meal or two throughout the year. The Club brings the older community together for refreshments and provides the opportunity to socialise. We also encourage the sharing of faith and beliefs as our aim as a church group is to win souls for Christ.

Thursday

- **Parents and Toddlers**

This provides an environment for young children and their carers to meet, for children to develop their social skills and for carers to share their experiences and support each other. We include members of all faiths and none and foster the acceptance of minorities in our community.

As a church group to show Gods love in a practical way and to share the gospel with all. To encourage church attendance if possible where one does not exist.

Everyone is made very welcome. A small charge of £1 is made to cover our weekly costs.

Several of our members are from the Polish community, the Indian community and the Iranian community.

Babies and Toddlers use age appropriate toys. Where requests are made for specialist toys we endeavour to accommodate this.

Each week a short bible story is shared as well as a few choruses and finger songs/rhymes. This is followed by juice, tea/coffee toast and cheese and occasional treats. This is one of the highlights for the adults as they get to enjoy tea etc., made for them.

- **Boys Brigade (Anchor Boys, Junior Section and Company Section)**

Anchor Boys is the youngest section of the 42nd BB organised by Strand Presbyterian Church & held in its halls every Thursday from 6.30 – 7.30pm for boys in P1 – P4. Each week they meet and enjoy games, Bible stories, group-work, craft and much more!

The Anchor Boys is attended mostly by boys without any other church connection. We follow the main themes of the Boys Brigade in planning our programme. Our main focus is evangelism and have a regular Bible teaching element as part of our weekly programme. We also seek to build relationships with the children attending and our hope is to see those who don't have a Church connection, coming along to join us in Sunday worship. We also try to build relationships with the parents by encouraging them to come into the building and pick up their children and a couple of times each session we visit the homes to give out notes about our activities and to reconnect with the families following a break.

The Junior Section helps to support boys aged 8-11 (P5 - P7) to reach their full potential by providing opportunities to meet together and engage in a range of fun and developmental activities & experiences. In keeping with the object of the Boys Brigade – "The advancement of Christ's kingdom", we encourage boys to explore their faith.

The Company Section, for boys in school years 8 to 14 is gaining momentum following its restart. The Company Section's challenging, fun and varied programme is designed to contribute to a boy's physical, educational, social and spiritual development.

PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

THE Presbyterian Church in Ireland meets the public benefit requirement by providing benefit to its members and the general public by making known the Christian Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ through the advancement of religion.

The direct benefits which flow from the purposes of the Church include the gaining of an understanding in Christian beliefs as set out in the Bible and in the Church's subordinate standards (the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Shorter & Larger Catechisms) leading to spiritual and moral development and opportunities for response to Bible teaching. In turn, this framework leads to practical expressions of Christian Beliefs and standards in the local community such as through the care of those in need (including the sick, disabled and bereaved).

Generally, the above benefits are delivered locally by congregations and their members or are facilitated through presbyteries or are organised and delivered centrally. Local delivery is facilitated by local resources in almost all cases. Public access is made known through the use of noticeboards, printed material, websites and social media or in other ways.

The benefits are demonstrated through regular evaluation of the services and informal and ad-hoc feedback from members, their families and members of the public.

The purpose does not lead to harm. The only private benefit flowing from our purpose is related to Ministers, Missionaries, Deaconesses, Irish Mission Workers

and Lay Agents who receive benefits as a result of their holding office or employment. However, this is incidental and necessary in order to further our charitable purpose. There are no other private benefits. The beneficiaries of this purpose are members, their families, other individuals that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is in direct and indirect contact with, the community in which pastoral services are provided and other communities throughout Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and worldwide which benefit from our engagement with and support for both Christian and other secular organisations, charities and individual members of the public.

The Kirk Session has had regard to the Charity Commission's Public Benefit Requirement statutory guidance.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The congregation's main source of income is members' contributions through the Weekly Freewill Offering (WFO). There were 79 contributors during the year (77 in previous year, 2023), donating a total amount of £65,145 (£67,097 in previous year, 2023).

Total income of the congregation during the year was £123,962; compared to £115,137 in the previous year.

Total Expenditure was £98,831, compared with £235,844 in the previous year (2023). The difference is attributed to the purchase of a house in 2023 and the savings made by the retirement of the Minister in April 2024.

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the annual report and the financial statements of the congregation in accordance with applicable law and generally accepted accounting practice.

As the congregation's total income does not exceed £250,000, the Trustees have elected under Section 64(3) of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 to prepare a receipts and payment account and a statement of assets and liabilities.

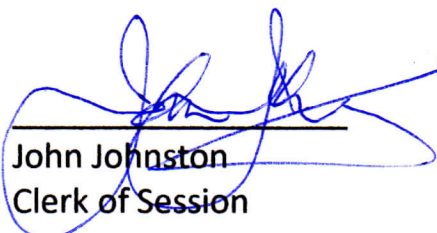
The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the congregation's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time its financial position. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the congregation and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Approved by the Kirk Session at a meeting on __ September 2025 and signed on its behalf by



Rev Alan Marsh
Minister

Date: 14 October 2025



John Johnston
Clerk of Session

Date: 14 October 2025