

**Mersey Street Presbyterian Church - a congregation of  
the Presbyterian Church in Ireland**

**Trustees Annual Report for the year ended  
31 December 2023**

Mersey Street Presbyterian Church  
67-69 Mersey Street  
Belfast  
BT4 1EX

Registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC 104507

## **CHARITY TRUSTEES**

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

Rev Dr Colin Burcombe

Mr Thomas Craig

Mr George Dunbar

Mr Jim Finlay

Mr Ken Hamilton

Mr Drew Patton

Miss Irene Scott

Mr Ronnie Sykes

## **PRINCIPAL OFFICE BEARERS**

Minister	Rev Dr Colin Burcombe
Clerk of Session	George Dunbar
Secretary	David Latimer
Treasurer	Thomas Craig

## **INDEPENDENT EXAMINER**

Mr Alexander Hill

## **BANKERS**

Danske Bank

Knock Branch

Upper Newtownards Road

Belfast

## **STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **The Kirk Session**

The charity trustees of the congregation are the members of its Kirk Session. The Code of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is the book of the constitution and government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Under this governing document, 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.

Meetings of the Kirk Session are scheduled six times per year, or more frequently if required.

To be chosen for the office of the eldership in the congregation a person must be a voting member and a regular attendant on its ordinances. The selection of those proposed to be called to the office can be either by the congregation or the Kirk Session.

## **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. Mersey Street 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**

Mersey Street 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 of the Old and New Testaments, 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 'to know Jesus and make Him known.'

The congregation aims to live out its vision as a family of God's people through worship, fellowship and mission.

## **ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES**

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

### Sunday

- Sunday School
- Youth Fellowship
- Bible Class
- Sunday Crèche
- Children's Church

### Monday

- Rainbows
- Presbyterian Women (on a monthly basis)

### Tuesday

- Fun Factory (an after-schools club)
- Alpha Stars and Alpha Boys

### Wednesday

- Midweek Bible Study

Thursday

- Warm space
- Brownies
- Girl Guides

Friday

- Sewing Club
- Choir (when practicing)

## **ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

### *Worship, Fellowship and Mission*

The congregation meets for worship every Sunday at 11.30am and 7.00pm.

Every Wednesday evening, we hold a Bible study and prayer meeting providing the opportunity for members to meet together for fellowship, to study the scriptures and for a time of prayer. This is led once a month by one of the elders. There is also a prayer meeting before our evening service.

The church WhatsApp group formed at the beginning of the lockdowns in 2020 continues to serve as a hub for devotional purposes and prayer updates.

In addition, the congregation continues to financially support 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.

At 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023, there were 41 communicant members and 100 families connected with the congregation.

### **Presbytery**

The congregation was represented at the regular meetings of Presbytery by our minister and one of the elders, George Dunbar.

### **General Assembly**

The minister and one of our elders were permitted to attend the meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in Assembly Buildings, Belfast in June.

### **Property**

Regular maintenance of the church building and halls was carried out during the year. Some maintenance work was also carried out at the church manse.

## **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 central 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 the Minister, who receives benefits as a result of holding office. 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.

## **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

The congregation's main source of income is members' contributions through the Freewill Offering (FWO) and Buildings envelopes. There were 49 contributors during the year, donating a total amount of £45,049 through FWO. Total giving which includes FWO, loose cash, buildings envelopes and harvest amounted to £51,732.

The total income of the congregation during the year was £91,161 compared to £65,079 in the previous year.

The total expenditure was £71,301 a decrease of £1,184.

## **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 and signed on its behalf by

*Colin Burcombe*

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Rev Dr Colin Burcombe (Minister)

20<sup>th</sup> October 2024

*George Dunbar*

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Mr George Dunbar (Clerk of Session)

20<sup>th</sup> October 2024