

HIGH STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ANTRIM, CHARITY REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2023

This report includes information required by the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the Statement of Recommended Practice for Accounting by Charities 2005 as applicable to charities entitled to prepare accounts on the receipts and payments basis.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

High Street Presbyterian Church, Antrim is a local church of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and is a member church of the general Assembly of the Church. It was registered on 15/08/2016 as Charity Number 104909.

High Street Church is situated at 22 Steeple Road, Antrim BT41 1DN. Telephone 9446 8339, email info@highstchurch.org.

The members of the Elders' Meeting for the time being are recognised as the charity trustees. Those who served from 1st January 2020 until the date this report was approved are:

Rev Colin Kerr McDowell
Mrs Nancy Agnes Bonar
Mr James Samuel Gleghorne
Mr David James Gleghorne
Mrs Margaret Mary Kempston
Mr Robert Edward Campbell
Mr William Canning
Mr Robert Coulter Bonar
Mr Herbert Hewitt
Mrs Esme Miskelly
Mr Ian Saunders
Mr Christopher Ian Titterington

The Church building and the manse at 16 Beechfield, Antrim BT41 1BS, are vested in High Street Presbyterian Church as trustees and held for the benefit of High Street Presbyterian Church in accordance with the trusts applicable to Presbyterian Church in Ireland properties.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE 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 promotes 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 congregations. All members are entitled to propose, speak and exercise equal votes at meetings, except that the Moderator, the ministers in active duty in the congregation, has no deliberative but only a casting vote. 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 by the Kirk Session. Members are elected if they obtain two-thirds of those who vote.

Stated meetings of the Kirk session were held 9 times throughout the year.

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. High Street congregation of the Presbyterian Church has been assigned to the Templepatrick Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The membership of the Presbytery consists mainly of the 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. In-person presbytery meetings have now recommenced, Presbytery meets six times per year and five of the meetings take place in High Street Church, this is because of our central location.

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, administration and judicial authority, in dealing with all matters brought before it. The General Assembly met from the 21st to 24th of June 2023 for worship and to conduct its business. At the end of 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

The charitable purpose of the congregation is the advancement of religion.

High Street congregation of the 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 Bible and exists to love and honour God and enable her members to play their part in fulfilling God's mission.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The congregation meets for worship every Sunday and visitors are welcome to join. The Sacrament of the Lords Supper is observed on four occasions during 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 organisations.

Worship and prayer

The congregation normally meets for worship each Sunday at 11am and on the first Sunday of each month, also at 7pm. On the second Sunday of each month a special 'All Together' service is held where the whole congregation worship together with the children and the service contains music and a talk which is appropriate for all age groups. On the other Sundays of the month the children and young people go out to Sunday School and Bible Class half way through the service. Morning services are livestreamed for the benefit of those unable to attend. During the week the Bible Study provides an opportunity for members to meet for fellowship, to study the Bible and for a time of prayer.

As well as our regular services during the year we acknowledged God's gift of new life at services for Sacraments of Baptism. Marriage and Funeral services are conducted whenever appropriate and necessary.

On 31 December 2023 there were 213 communicant members and 228 families connected with the congregation. The average weekly attendance at morning worship is 100, plus online attendance.

Pastoral care

Members of the congregation who are unable to attend church due to sickness or age are visited by the minister, elders or by the Pastoral Assistant.

Mission and outreach

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, assist with the running costs of Union Theological College, the Church's training college for ministry students, and financially supports congregation in the areas of worship, discipleship, global mission, outreach, leadership and pastoral care.

The congregation also contributes to the denominations annual World Development Appeal, Sunday School project and any other special appeals.

Presbytery

The congregation was represented at the regular meetings of Presbytery by our minister and/or one of the elders. This provides an important link between the congregations and the wider structures of the church.

General Assembly

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

Property

During the year minor repairs continued to be carried out within the church sanctuary and church halls.

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 and 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, press advertisement, 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 Commissions Public benefit requirement statutory guidance.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Total income received in the year was £ 155,371 (2022 £ 177,535) The main source of donations is contributions through freewill offerings with just over 85% (2022 86%) of this from donations and legacies.

Fund expenses has increased in the year from £ 157,809 in 2022 to £ 158,266 in 2023 due to an increase in general assembly assessments and congregational running expenses.

RESERVE POLICY:

Unrestricted funds:

Ideally the Elders' Meeting would wish to have in hand an amount equal to six months regular expenditure as free reserves to meet shortfalls in income or unexpected expenses.

The balance of unrestricted funds at 31st December 2023 was £50,094. This represents the amount available for regular expenditure.

This report was approved by the Elders' Meeting on and is signed on its behalf by Rev Colin McDowell (Minister) on 28th May 2024.



Rev Colin Kerr Mc Dowell