

## **HILLTOWN CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT**

The Trustees present their Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 and a Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at that date.

### **REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS**

Hilltown congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
Main Street  
Hilltown  
Co Down  
BT34 5UH

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC 104938)

### **CHARITY TRUSTEES**

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

John Alexander Ervine

### **PRINCIPAL OFFICE BEARERS**

Vacancy Convenor  
Clerk of Session  
Treasurer

Rev. Kenneth Nelson  
John Alexander Ervine  
James Robert Alexander Ervine

### **INDEPENDENT EXAMINER**

**Mr James Lockhart A.C.M.A.**  
**6 Breezeways**  
**Banbridge**  
**Co Down**  
**BT32 3XX**

**BANKERS**

**Bank of Ireland  
12 Trevor Hill  
Newry  
Co Down  
BT34 1DT**

**SOLICITORS**

**Fisher and Fisher LLP  
1 Newry Street  
Rathfriland  
Co Down  
BT34 5PY**

## **HILLTOWN CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND**

### **TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (cont'd)**

#### **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 (position currently held by the vacancy convenor) 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 held on a regular basis, usually at least 4 times a year.

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 the 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. Hilltown congregation of the Presbyterian Church has been assigned to the Iveagh 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 each congregation in the Presbytery.

## **HILLTOWN CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (cont'd)**

### **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 is normally constituted during the first week in June 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.

Hilltown 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.

Our mission statement is simply summed up in the opening answer of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which states that our 'chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever'. All our services, activities and organisations have this overarching purpose.

### **ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES**

The congregation meets for worship every Sunday and visitors are welcome to join. The Sacrament of the Lords Supper is observed on several 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 including

- Sunday School
- Youth Fellowship
- Girl's Brigade
- Presbyterian Women
- 'Daniel's Band' (primary school aged children's ministry)

## **ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

### **Worship and prayer**

The congregation normally meets for worship each Sunday at 12:15pm and 6:30pm. The evening service is shared with Clonduff Presbyterian, our sister congregation, and the venue alternates accordingly. During the week the Bible Study provides an opportunity for members to meet together for fellowship, to study the scriptures and for a time of prayer.

At 31 December 2023 there were 58 communicant members and 53 families connected with the congregation. The average weekly attendance at morning worship is 30.

### **Pastoral care**

Members of the congregation who are unable to attend church due to sickness or age are visited on a regular basis by the minister, elders or indeed by members of the congregation at large.

### **Mission and outreach**

All our services and organizations have a conscious focus on mission. We likewise engage in a number of activities that are intentionally aimed at sharing the love of Jesus with people outside our own congregation, including children's ministry in Hilltown village and a Bible study in the local hotel.

One of the key elements of our mission work is to encourage and support our members in the unique mission God has given them as individuals. As part of this we have given prayerful and financial assistance to some of our members undertaking mission work elsewhere (on this island or overseas). We keenly support a number of charitable works, perhaps most notably Tearfund.

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 areas of worship, discipleship, global mission, outreach, leadership and pastoral care.

## **HILLTOWN CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (cont'd)**

### **Presbytery**

The congregation was represented at the regular meetings of Presbytery by our minister (vacancy convenor) 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 (vacancy convenor) 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**

There was no significant property repairs with only maintenance being carried out in 2023 with regards to the Church manse. We are thankful to be able to keep our property well maintained.

### **Organisations**

While only a handful of children are in our **Sunday School**, we are very grateful for them and for their excellent teachers. Their participation in Sunday services is appreciated by one and all.

Roughly a dozen post-primary aged young people are involved in our **Youth Fellowship**, which typically meets after the evening service on Sundays.

**Daniel's Band** is on a Tuesday evening for primary school aged children, with somewhere in the region of 20 attending regularly. Among the highlights is the enthusiastic singing of the children, which the whole congregation enjoyed at the annual Daniel's Band Service.

On Thursday evenings our **Presbyterian Women** (PW) group meets once a month. The ladies have close relationships and are a great support to one another and the congregation at large.

Around 30 members attend **Girls' Brigade** on a Friday evening, with a variety of activities provided for girls aged 3 – 18. The annual display around Easter time was a great night for one and all.

**Youth Club** meets on Saturday evenings once a fortnight. While numbers are lower than the huge crowds of years gone by, those present continue to enjoy a range of games and other fun.

### **Volunteers**

We are deeply grateful to all who enthusiastically and consistently serve the Lord in various ways within our congregation.

## **HILLTOWN CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (cont'd)**

### **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.

## **HILLTOWN CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (cont'd)**

### **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

The congregation's main source of income is members' contributions through the Weekly Freewill Offering. There were 101 contributors during the year [100 in previous year, 2022] donating a total of £25,415 (£23,599 in previous year, 2022)

Total Income of the congregation during the year was £42,598 compared to £38,093 in the previous year.

Total expenditure decreased from £39,533 to £32,511.

### **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 15 April 2024 and signed on its behalf by

John A. Ervine

15 April 2024