

**Hillsborough Presbyterian Church**  
**A congregation of the**  
**Presbyterian Church in Ireland**

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

**Registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC105135**

## **TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT**

The Trustees present their Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 including a Balance Sheet as at that date.

## **REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS**

Hillsborough Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
49 Lisburn Street, HILLSBOROUGH, BT26 6AB

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland NIC105135

## **CHARITY TRUSTEES**

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

Rev Dr Allen Sleith	Mr Derek McClelland
Mrs Elizabeth Arthur	Miss Joyce McKee
Mr Maurice Arthur	Mrs Olive McKibbin
Mrs Christine Bell	Mr Carson McMullan
Mrs Ann Davey	Mr Cecil Murphy
Mrs Grace Davin	Mr Edward Poots
Mrs Helen Dunlop	Mrs Barbara Reid
Mr William Dunlop	Miss Lyndsey Shields
Mr Michael Francey	Mr Michael Warnock
Mrs Denise Henry	Mr David Workman
Mr Jon Henry	

**PRINCIPAL OFFICE BEARERS**

Minister	Rev Dr Allen Sleith
Clerk of Session	Miss Joyce McKee
Treasurer	Mr Carl Thompson (Acting)

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER: Adrian Hall & Co Chartered Accountants 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 100 Main Street, BANGOR, BT20 4AG**

**BANKERS: Danske Bank 62-66 Bow Street Lisburn BT28 1YS**

**SOLICITORS: WG Maginess & Son 68 Bow Street, LISBURN, BT28 1AL**

## 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 growth 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 Committee are elected by the congregation, and each Committee serves for a period of 3 Years. 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 the Moderator, the minister in active duty in the congregation, who has no deliberative but only a casting vote.

Stated meetings of the Kirk Session are held bi-monthly each year or as appropriate. In 2023, the Kirk Session of Hillsborough Presbyterian Church met on 5 occasions.

To be chosen for the office of the eldership in the congregation a person must be a voting member and a regular attender at its ordinances. The selection of those proposed to be called to the office of eldership is undertaken by the Kirk Session.

- (i) On two successive Sundays the congregation shall be informed that an election of ruling elders is to take place and voting members invited to propose, in writing, for the consideration of the Session, any member or members qualified for the office.
- (ii) The Session having considered the proposals received and having obtained the consent of those approved, shall list the names of those to be presented to the congregation.

### 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. Hillsborough Presbyterian Church has been assigned to the Dromore 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.

## 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 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

Hillsborough 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 statement is:

*"We believe in God. We accept the uniqueness of the revelation of God by Jesus Christ. We rejoice in the present power of the Holy Spirit. We acknowledge our understanding of God is imperfect; our picture of Jesus is blurred; our response to the Holy Spirit is inadequate. But our goal is to present each person mature in Christ, able to express and enjoy God."*

The congregation aims to live out its Mission Statement as a family of God's people by:

- Providing worship opportunities;
- Developing the faith of its members;
- Recognising young people as a vital part of today's church and seeking to facilitate their faith journey;
- Ministering to the ill, the dying and the bereaved and others in need of pastoral care;
- Offering a variety of organisations for the social, physical and spiritual development of members;
- Reaching out to non-members with the love of Christ;
- Exercising an influence on the life of the community through the involvement of members in its economic, business, educational, political, sporting and social life.

## **ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES**

Hillsborough Presbyterian Church supports a wide range of organisations providing spiritual, social and recreational activities within the congregation and the wider community. In 2023, we responded to specific identified needs within our community through the consolidation of existing groups and services based within the congregation as well as a number of one-off activities such as a Christmas Tree festival and our continuing commitment to Christmas Cracker, an event designed to support the carers of adults with learning disabilities. We have also developed a partnership with another local church which has enabled us to increase our capacity to respond to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in our area. This involves financial and practical help to find and offset the costs involved in the initial set up of suitable accommodation. We also co-operate with another local church to offer All Nations meals monthly and, in another church setting, to assist with English language classes for Ukrainian adults.

### **Providing worship opportunities**

At the heart of our activities is Sunday morning worship, and while we encourage members to attend worship in person, we recognise that for a small but important group of members, the experience of COVID continues to fundamentally affect their confidence in attending worship and Church activities. To respond to the needs of this group, we continue to “live stream” our services and have also restarted the practice of distributing CD recordings of the services to house-bound members of the congregation.

We recognise the need to make our worship as relevant and appealing to as many people as we can. In 2023, we appointed a new Music Co-ordinator, to lead our worship through the ministry of music. This has resulted in the introduction of a developing range and variety of praise and music being employed on Sunday mornings and has been warmly welcomed by the congregation.

### **Developing the faith of its members**

During the autumn of 2023 the Adult Study Group twice met again in person for 2 separate 6-week programmes. Trustees are pleased to note that numbers attending have increased throughout the year.

The Prayer Group met 10 times through the year, with a clear calendar of topics supported by helpful guidance and materials. In 2023, we also hosted a 24-hour prayer vigil on the theme of global conflict.

In 2023, we ran a short series of seminars which focused on supporting parents of young children develop their faith and understanding. Again, numbers attending were low, but appear to have had a positive impact on those who attended as their regular attendance at worship has increased since the seminars took place.

**Recognising young people as a vital part of today's church and seeking to facilitate their faith journey**

As a church we believe that our children and young people are a significant part of the church family. Our specific provision for children and young people on Sunday mornings consists of "Flare", an innovative and interactive programme for all our young people, and 2023 saw a modest but measurable growth in numbers attending. Young people of year 8 to year 14 age groups met both virtually and in person on Sunday evenings for fun, friendship and faith development in "Ignite" and "Flame". There are also large Girl's Brigade and Boy's Brigade Companies which are open to all local children whether they have other connections with the church or not. Spark Youth Club meets every Friday night during school term and has average weekly attendance of 75 children.

During the summer of 2023, a week-long Holiday Bible Club for P1 to P7 children was organised by our Youth Development Worker and volunteer Youth Leaders. Young people also again took part in a broader community initiative called "Love for Lisburn" which focused on providing a service to our local community.

We seek to co-ordinate services to support our children and young people through a Youth Vision Group. This is made up of representatives of leaders and helpers involved in different youth organisations, and, while co-ordinating and streamlining youth-based activities, also provides a space for young people to contribute to the overall planning of activities within the congregation and local community. Our young people also led our morning worship on Children and Young Peoples Day and on the Sunday before Christmas.

In 2023 our Youth Development Worker initiated a drop-in facility to allow young people of high school age an opportunity to meet informally after school one afternoon a week, de-compress, reflect on events in their lives and relax in a safe environment. While numbers attending are low, the drop-in has had a significant pastoral role for the young people who attend.

In 2023, we were also able to offer a development opportunity for a young person who is interested in developing a career in youth work through the provision of an unpaid internship. This experience has been very positive for all concerned and is a development we would wish to pursue further should circumstances allow.

We continue to have a well-developed safeguarding system in place, with comprehensive records held of all leaders and helpers, child protection training and any concerns with related actions.

**Ministering to the ill, the dying and the bereaved and others in need of pastoral care**

In 2023, the role of Minister of Pastoral Visitation became vacant. We are actively seeking a replacement for this role.

We have a well-established system that links each member of Kirk Session to a group of members in geographical districts. Members of Kirk Session are expected to visit people in their district at least twice a year, and at periods of sickness, bereavement or any other critical event. Where necessary, the District Elder can refer an individual or family to other sources of support such as HOST. The primary responsibility of visiting those who are terminally ill continues to rest with our Minister, supported by the District Elder and the Minister of Pastoral Visitation.

### **Offering a variety of organisations for the social, physical and spiritual development of members**

We provide a broad range of organisations to support the social, physical and spiritual development of our members. Each of these organisations has its own statement of purpose which outlines how it does so. We have linked each organisation to a member of Kirk Session and have a schedule of regular reports on each organisation to formal meeting of Kirk Session.

Organisations associated with the congregation are:

Spark Youth Club	Boys' Brigade
Girls' Brigade	Adult Study Group
Parent and Toddlers	Men's Group
Badminton Club	Choir
Helping Hands Knitting Group	Indoor Bowling Club
Evergreens	Presbyterian Women
Flame	Happy Stitchers
Ignite	Eco-subgroup
Prayer Chain	Prayer Time
Flare	Soup Lunches
Poetry Circle	Gardening Club
Hillsborough Outreach Support Team (HOST)	

## **ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

### **Worship**

The congregation meets for worship each Sunday morning at 10.30am and in the evenings for special seasonal services such as Harvest Celebration, and a service to mark Maundy Thursday. We continue to use a twin track approach with both Church-based and on-line services being provided. We held Communion Services 5 times in the year on 8 January, 14 March, 9 May, 12 September and 14 November. We also celebrated Harvest and Remembrance Day with special services and held services of dedication for our leaders and members of the Girls and Boy's Brigades



As well as our regular services during the year we acknowledged God's gift of new life at ten Sacraments of Baptism, and we conducted two marriage services. We continued to give thanks for faithful service and sought to comfort those who had been bereaved during the year.

On 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 there were 433 communicant members and 459 families connected with the congregation.

### **Pastoral care**

Members of Kirk Session are assigned districts or localities and are tasked with maintaining oversight of the pastoral needs of members of the congregation living in that area. HOST (Hillsborough Outreach Support Team) aims to be responsive to situations of need within the congregation, local community and wider afield. HOST members responded positively to requests from the congregation and the local community, e.g., shopping, lifts to essential hospital appointments, etc. HOST also organised a 'Christmas Cracker' event to provide support for adults with learning disabilities and their carers. HOST lead the congregational response to the situation in Ukraine, offering practical and financial support to refugees from the conflict on behalf of the congregation, and is the main contact point for all support to refugees and asylum seekers

In 2021, we successfully applied for funding from the Public Health Agency which allowed us to develop a range of activities to support positive mental health among our members. We built on the success of this programme in 2022 and again in 2023 when we ran a further week-long programme to support and enhance the mental health and wellbeing of participants.

### **Reaching out to non-members with the love of Christ**

Our modern facilities have enabled the congregation to implement its congregational mission plan which focuses on three interlinked areas:

1. Equipping ourselves for mission;
2. Serving God in our congregation and families;
3. Serving God in the community and beyond.

The congregation supports the United Appeal for Mission (£15,114) 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.

**Exercising an influence on the life of the community through the involvement of members in its economic, business, educational, political, sporting and social life**

In 2023, we received funding from Lisburn City and Castlereagh Council that enabled us to set up a Warm Bank on Church premises. The initial response to this was positive, but at the request of those attending, this was changed to the provision of a soup lunch once a week. This has proven to be a significant development, particularly for older people living alone.

Throughout the year, the congregation supported the Lisburn Foodbank. The response from the congregation remains excellent, with the items of foodstuff and monetary donations gratefully received.

We have developed a positive working relationship with our local primary school, mainly through the efforts of our Youth Development Worker who regularly takes assemblies in the school, encouraging them to attend, for example, our weekly youth club.

We are also fortunate to have two members of the congregation as Governors of the local Primary School.

We continue to make our premises available to local community groups, including exercise classes, Blood Transfusion Sessions, and one-off events such as the Honey Fair.

We also run annual Antiques and Collectibles and Christmas Craft Fairs as fundraising events which also cement our place in the local community and further afield.

However, a key element of our outreach to the local community remains the monthly car boot sale. This attracts a core of 30 participants with stalls or car park spaces. Many of these are also fundraising for charities or community organisations such as the Rotary Club. The car boot sale has become a significant community hub for Hillsborough and the surrounding areas.

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

### **Presbytery**

In 2023, the Presbytery of Dromore held several in-person meetings. The congregation was represented at these by our minister and a representative elder. This continues to provide an important link between the congregation and the wider structures of the Church.

### **General Assembly**

In June 2023, the General Assembly met in person. Hillsborough Presbyterian Church was represented by the Minister and one member of Kirk Session.

### **Property**

The Church Property Sub-committee met in person through 2023 and continues to implement a programme of maintenance and repair of Church premises. This includes regular fire and asbestos risk inspections; legionella checks; boiler services and general building maintenance. We also funded and oversaw the installation of a stair lift in our manse property.

In 2023, we appointed a new Church Officer following an open recruitment process.

In addition, in 2022, Trustees, through a small sub-group, successfully applied for funding to transform an area of waste ground into a community garden. This work was completed in 2023. We celebrated this event with a community event in the garden, emphasising that the garden is open to everyone. It is gratifying to note that members of the public are already using the garden as a place of rest and contemplation.

### **Volunteers**

In 2023, the congregation appointed a new Congregational Committee. This meant that membership of all sub-committees was subject to change as new members were assigned to different tasks and responsibilities. The Trustees wish to acknowledge their deep appreciation of those who give freely of their time by serving on committees and helping with organisations and other church activities. The Trustees also wish to acknowledge the commitment of all leaders and helpers involved in the leadership of the full range of activities which the church offers.

## **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.

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

### **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

The congregation's main source of income comes from members' contributions through the Weekly Freewill Offering. There were 295 contributing families during the year (293 in 2022) donating a total including Gift Aid of £159,789 compared to £157,899 in the previous year.

Total income of the congregation was £322,493 compared to £314,783 for 2022.

Total Expenditure of the congregation during the year was £371,213 compared to £340,530 for 2022.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES IN RESPECT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The Trustees are required to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the congregations and the financial activities for that year. In preparing the financial statements the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Funds will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the funds transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the congregations and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Statement of Recommended Practice "Accounting and Reporting by Charities (1 January 2015)". 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.

## **THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND ANNUAL REPORT**

**For the year ended 31 December 2023**

### **GOING CONCERN**

The activities of the congregation are dependent on ongoing contributions from its members. The Trustees are of the opinion that the congregation has sufficient resources at the date of approval of these financial statements to meet commitments which will arise in the year from the date of signing this report and subject to the continuing support from members to fund on an ongoing basis the congregation's current activities and other financial commitments.

### **RESERVES POLICY**

The Trustees have considered the level of unrestricted reserves which it is appropriate to hold taking account of current and ongoing commitments. It is the policy of the Trustees to hold at least 3 months' normal expenditure. At the end of the year unrestricted reserves were £35,000.

(Funds held in capital Reserve were to be invested in the PCI General Investment Fund. A decision on making this investment was deferred by the finance committee due to the uncertainty created in the financial markets by Brexit)

### **RISK REVIEW**

*(provide a summary of the Trustees' assessment of principal risks)*

A review of major risks is regularly undertaken by the Trustees and systems and procedures implemented to manage identified risks. The principal risks are in relation to the likelihood of reputational damage and financial risks associated with the expectation of ongoing financial support from members. These risks are mitigated by the Trustees and the Congregational Committee regularly monitoring the finances of the congregation at stated meetings and by encouraging members in their regular giving. We have clear policies such as Health and Safety and Taking Care which are regularly updated. One member of Kirk Session also acts as the Designated Person for Child Protection within the congregation.

Approved by the Kirk Session at a meeting on 10 September 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

Rev Dr Allen Sleith  
10 September 2024

Joyce McKee  
10 September 2024