

The Religious Society of Friends
(Quakers) In Ireland,
South Belfast Preparative Meeting

Trustee Annual Report for year ended
31st December 2022

South Belfast Preparative Meeting

Trustees (at 31st December 2022)

Brian Davis (Chair)

Sylvia Roberts

Will Haire

Contact Name & Address

Brian Davis

24 Moss Road

BT36 5JY

Charity number

NIC 107080

Bankers

Co-operative Bank (current account & deposit account)

Facebook page

South Belfast Quaker Meeting

@SouthBelfastQuakers

Website

www.southbelfastquakers.org

Trustees' Report for year ended 31st December 2022

Introduction

This report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and in line with the guidance produced by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

Constitution and governance

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) In Ireland, South Belfast Preparative Meeting is governed by its governing document which was agreed by the Preparative Meeting on March 25th 2018. The Meeting was registered as a charity by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland on 17th May 2018.

The Trustees, of whom there should be not less than two, are appointed at the Annual General Meeting. They are appointed for a period of up to three years and are eligible for re-appointment for a further two terms. Trustees who served during the year ending 31st December 2022 were as follows:

Brian Davis (Chair of Trustees)
Sylvia Roberts
Will Haire

The Trustees are responsible for the policies, activities and assets of the charity. No Trustee received any remuneration for services as a member of the Board of Trustees and the charity has no employees.

There is in place a data protection policy and a child protection policy, both of which are reviewed annually.

Purposes of the charity

South Belfast Preparative Meeting is established by Lisburn Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland. It is primarily a Meeting for Worship that practises in accordance with the principles of the Religious Society of Friends, also known as Quakers.

We are based in a Meeting House at Marlborough Park North in Belfast. As well as the main meeting room where we meet for worship on a Sunday, we also have a kitchen and three smaller meeting rooms.

The purpose of our charity, as set out in our governing document, is the advancement of the general religious purposes of the Religious Society of Friends by the following means, in so far as they are exclusively charitable:

- i. Strengthening the Christian understanding and religious development of the Quaker meeting both in the geographical area of the Preparative Meeting and beyond;
- ii. Contributing financially and practically to the relief of suffering at home and abroad;

- iii. Providing for the pastoral care of individual Members and Attenders including assistance to those in need

Our activities during 2022

In 2022 we have enjoyed a full year both spiritually and socially as a meeting. We have been pleased to see a return to a predominantly physical rather than virtual presence in our meeting room each Sunday, although, with a team of volunteers we keep our Meetings blended to address the needs of Friends unable to be at South Belfast. We continued to monitor the Covid 19 procedures each month at our M&O committee meetings and ensured that appropriate limited preventative measures remained in place.

On average 35 adults worship at our Meetings, and 4 younger people. We have also had regular, monthly "Conversations" after Meeting, on a range of spiritual and social justice issues.

Sadly, we recorded the death of one of our members during the year but were pleased to note that 2 Friends who are regular attenders at our meeting have been accepted into membership this year. We also were delighted that during 2022 two of our Members married in the Meeting House.

Our Bible Study group has continued to meet, though not in person, while a new group to study Quaker books and other spirituality writing has now been formed, with up to 18 Friends joining in discussion.

With the end of the restrictions from the pandemic, 4 evening sessions on a Quaker Quest model were organised in April/ May. Each evening had a theme – God and Faith; Worship; Integrity; Equality and Diversity - introduced by 3 brief talks followed by discussion groups and a Meeting for Worship. The sessions were well attended by Friends and attenders including several from other Meetings.

Many of our members and attenders volunteered at Yearly Meeting (YM) at Stranmillis in August and we were pleased to host YM Sunday at South Belfast when about 100 Friends, in person and on 'Zoom' enjoyed Meeting for Worship together and a buffet lunch followed in the garden. The YM experience encouraged us to list our Meeting as a host for FWCC's World Quaker Day in October when we were one of a few Meetings across the world to be available via Zoom for Friends to join an international Meeting. We were joined by local visitors as well as Friends from Britain, Europe and the Americas.

Other events have also been held throughout the year, such as the pre-Christmas Craft Fair organised with Frederick Street Meeting, helped to funds for charities and build the links within our community.

Website and Outreach

The website continued to be a helpful first point of contact for those enquiring about joining us as new attenders and for those interested in hiring the meeting house for events. We seek to keep it refreshed with stories about our activities, and also ensure that details of our Ministry and Oversight teams are available to all. Facebook is also used to make sure that our

news is more widely circulated, with 412 followers, around 875 post views and 270 post engagements per month.

A new digital rota system for some Meeting responsibilities was established, sending email reminders to Friends with duties the following Sunday.

Children and Young People

Face to face sessions during Meeting every other week were revived during this year and a family Sunday was organised in December. The display boards on Quaker themes were refurbished and the older group had a mix of topics, sometimes with outside speakers including Gender Identity and 'Pebble Meditation'. There were visits by younger Friends to JYM, Junior and Senior Moyallon Camps, Yorkshire Holiday School and a European and Middle East Young Friends Gathering. We hope to encourage more volunteers to be involved with the young people's group in the coming year

The Annual Child Safeguarding report has been completed by our 2 safeguarding Representatives and forwarded to Monthly Meeting.

Eco-Quakers

South Belfast Eco Quakers continue to be an active group. The Loving Earth Project and its exhibition during the year was an important means for the promotion of environmental issues and outreach, as it was part of the Imagine Festival in Belfast and involved arts centres, district councils and other Meetings in the Portadown and Derry areas. A large number of volunteers enthusiastically helped the organising group. Other activities included a foraging walk in Castlewellan Forest, drafting a letter to politicians about home insulation and establishing a link with Friends.

Premises and Garden

The Premises Committee has met regularly throughout the year. Improvements to the premises have included new electric systems and a locked key safe. A bicycle shed was added in the corner of the car park, thanks to a generous donation from two Friends. The garden was maintained with the help of work parties after Meeting with a soup lunch provided and a cleaning party supplemented the work of the regular cleaners. Maintenance has been carried out and an environmental audit has helped to identify improvements such as new LED lighting, and a 'smart control' system for the central heating.

Bookings and Use of the Meeting House

Bookings returned to normal through the year, with a large number of groups as diverse as a yoga class, The New Apostolic Church, a chess club, the Baha'is community, a selection of music groups, workshops for young people in care and the Belfast Repair Café, as well as Meeting and other Quaker activities. The neighbours from Marlborough Park held a carol service in the car park the week before Christmas. Bookings can now be done via the website which helps to monitor both room use and finance. The increased use of the building meant that donations as a result of bookings have risen.

Support for Charities

During 2022, we donated a total of £11,869 to various Quaker and non-Quaker charities. We held a number of after-meeting special collections, which raised an additional £1,435 for six nominated charities. We held a plant sale in the car park and garden of the Meeting House which raised £790 for Quaker Service, and 'Big Breakfasts' in the Meeting House raised £540 for Ukrainian refugees (through the Disasters Emergency Committee).

On the first Sunday of every month, we collect donations of groceries and toiletries for the local Storehouse foodbank.

Financial Overview

With the end of lockdowns and restrictions due to Covid, our income significantly improved in 2022 as revenue from hiring the Meeting House returned almost to pre-pandemic levels. Donations from members and attenders along with Meeting House lettings constitutes most of our annual income.

Our spending on utility bills also rose sharply during 2022, increasing by 65% from £1.3K to £2.1K, but that was more than made up for by revenue from lettings nearly doubling from £5.5K to £9.4K.

We were able to pay our bills, make our usual donations to other charities, and end the year with a healthy balance in our current account of £14.7K.

Our deposit account remained the same as the previous year at £114K, £90K of which was a legacy from the estate of our late Friend Joan Huddleston. This balance also includes £24K reserves to ensure we can continue to run the Meeting should there be an unexpected decline in our income (as happened during the pandemic).

The share price of our investments with the NI Central Investment Fund for Charities fell in the last quarter of 2022, as a result of the government's mini-budget in September. As a result, the value of our investments fell from £136K in 2021 to £119K, but hopefully this will recover next year.

Looking Forward

All our activities need help to run and we are blessed with committed volunteers. Week after week Friends serve on coffee, door and flower rotas, organising Youth activities, attending to the premises and garden, convening and sitting on committees and serving the Meeting in a variety of ways.

Our Meeting continues to have a positive and open spirit.

Declaration

The report was approved by the Trustees, by telephone conference on October 12th, and is signed on behalf of the Trustees.

Brian Davis

Brian Davis
Chair of Trustees