

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

Trustee Annual Report for year ended  
31st December 2024

## South Belfast Preparative Meeting

### Trustees (at 31st December 2024)

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](http://www.southbelfastquakers.org)

## Trustees' Report for year ended 31st December 2024

### 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 25<sup>th</sup> 2018. The Meeting was registered as a charity by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland on 17<sup>th</sup> 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 2024 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;
- and

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

#### Our activities during 2024

In 2024 we have enjoyed a full year both spiritually and socially as a Meeting. We continue to meet each Sunday in a blended manner with a small number of Friends attending via zoom, due to location, health or other reasons. On average, over 40 adults and 5 younger people worship at our Meetings.

Two of our members sadly died during the year. In addition we have been delighted that one Friend who has been regularly attending our Meeting has entered into membership, while another Friend has transferred her membership from Britain Yearly Meeting. In addition, there have been three marriages, involving Members and Attenders.

Our "After Meeting Conversations" which generally take place on the 3rd Sunday of each month, have continued to be a useful tool for considering Quaker concerns, the Testimonies and the spiritual life and business needs of the Meeting. During February and March we joined with Frederick Street Meeting in co-hosting a well-attended series of four Quaker Quest sessions.

Our Worship Sharing Group, where a passage or passages from scripture are considered and discussed, also met monthly and was well attended.

Elders and Pastoral Friends (previously known as Overseers) have met regularly throughout the year, generally on the first Sunday of each month. We have read in Meeting for Worship, the Queries for Serious Consideration and General Christian Counsel from the Book of Organisation and Christian Discipline.

During this year, we as a Meeting decided to cease to use the term 'Overseer'. A significant prompting in this respect arose from an After Meeting Conversation held in May in which Friends spoke about the history and context of the term 'Overseer', with its links to the Slave Trade. We took the decision to change our language, because we now understand it to be outdated and offensive to many. The recommendation was considered at the November Preparative Meeting where Friends felt that a first step would be to begin to use the term Pastoral Friend in the context of the South Belfast Meeting, whilst deferring to Ireland Yearly Meeting (IYM) in the matter of exploring more wider usage. Our Ministry and Oversight committee (M&O) will now be known as Ministry and Pastoral Care (M&PC)

Our spiritual life has been complemented by a wide range of social activity, developing our community of Quakers. Our Spring Social Potluck in aid of Quaker Service in February, picnics in June and July after Meeting for Worship, and a September Potluck Social and Quiz with members of the Yearly Meetings Committee attending, were valuable in helping us get to know each other.

In August many of us attended Frederick Street Meeting to take part in the blended Meeting for Worship from the FWCC World Plenary conference in South Africa. The theme of the

conference was “Living the spirit of Ubuntu: Responding with hope to God’s call to cherish creation – and one another” The Meeting for Worship was a wonderfully inclusive experience – not only in terms of the number of countries represented but also in the way that the organisers integrated both programmed and unprogrammed worship.

A highlight of November was the annual Craft Fair which we host jointly with Frederick Street Friends to raise money for the work of Quaker Service and, this year, the Frederick Street renovation fund.

In December we held an all-age Meeting for Worship in which our young people brought some thoughtful, and inspiring, reflections to our annual Family Sunday. Their theme this year was focused around Diversity, and these reflections contributed greatly to what was a very meaningful Meeting.

Our Monthly Book Group has continued, offering an opportunity for regular exploration of spiritual, often Quaker, written materials.

#### Social media and website

Our website and Facebook page continue to be a means of outreach for our worshipping community. Each week we post on Facebook on themes from IYM Quaker Life and Practice, George Fox, John Woolman, and the Bible, along with photos from the main gathered events of the Meeting.

We now have 832 followers and have even been able to reunite old F/friends. The website is an excellent source of information, including the M&PC blog, events, articles, photos and room hiring information.

Churchbox.co.uk software is continuing to assist with coordinating all the different roles for a Sunday morning including Closing Meeting rota, Advice Queries rota, Flowers rota, Young Persons facilitation rota, Door Keeping rota and Tech rota.

#### Children and Young People

The Child Protection Policy has been adhered to and displayed on a notice board, with a photograph of the Designated Person. The Annual Child Safeguarding report has been completed by our 2 safeguarding Representatives and forwarded to Monthly Meeting.

The young people continued to meet every other week with 8-10 regular attenders. They have made an impressive contribution to our Meeting this year, including leading two All Age Meetings for Worship and undertaking a survey of Friends about their experience of Worship. This was fed back to Members and Attenders by way of an After Meeting Conversation.

There were visits by some of the young Friends to Junior Yearly Meeting, Junior and Senior Moyallon Camps and Yorkshire Friends Holiday School. South Belfast Young Friends represented IYM at British Junior Yearly Meeting in July and attended the European and Middle Eastern Section online youth group monthly.

## Peace, Sustainability and our witness to the wider world

2024 has been a challenging year as our world experiences war, conflict, division, and continued destruction of the environment. Many in South Belfast have struggled to know how to respond individually and collectively. This year saw us as a community develop a number of WhatsApp groups to help us communicate and support each other, including 'Living the Testimonies' and 'SB Activism'. There is no one way to respond mindfully and prayerfully to the world's crises, but we have supported each other in our responses. Many have joined marches, rallies and vigils in support of Palestinians amid the horror and destruction in Gaza, and we have taken a Quaker Peace banner on such marches. We have also attended environmental rallies, and turned out in support of victims of racism and hatred following the spate of racist attacks in Belfast in the summer.

We have held reflective Meetings on how to respond to the issues of War and Peace, both individually and collectively. This is an ongoing project where we seek to discern how best to play our part in building peace in a troubled world.

We have also explored issues of sustainability and justice through After Meeting Conversations, and through an evening addressing the concept of Active Hope. Active Hope, a concept popularised by Joanna Macy helps us to explore our personal and collective response to the Climate Crisis, including facing our grief and despair at the harm we have done and continue to do to the planet. A member of the Eco group has an ongoing online connection with Friends in Manchester, exploring how we can use some of the resources they have found useful to keep us informed and challenged.

Finally, members of the Eco-Quaker Planning Group participated in two half-day gatherings of the Creation Care Network – one during June in Drumalis Retreat Centre, Larne; the other in the South Belfast Meeting House during September.

### Premises

During the year several minor works have been carried out such as the placement of the Defibrillator and re-siting of the notice board. There has also been a need for ongoing liaison, managed by the Premises Committee with a neighbour because of the impact on our premises of their extensive building work.

The garden continues to be valued by all, with a number of work parties helping to keep it in good condition. Plans for the coming year include selecting suitable shrubs for the border outside the main meeting room and a few structural shrubs for the other border, amongst which, bee-friendly wildflowers can thrive.

We have a wonderful team of cleaners who also maintain an overview of the needs of the premises, which is used extensively by other groups and members of the wider community. 2024 has seen growth with the number of groups booking the Meeting House on a regular basis.

These bookings are a very important aspect of our outreach and engagement with the wider world, giving space to a number of Faith groups who do not have their own premises

(e.g. Salem church, Belfast Telugu Fellowship, White Eagle Lodge and Bahá'ís) plus a wide variety of community groups. The payments are of course important to us, but several groups have been given permission to use the Meeting House for free, including Belfast Repair Café and Quaker Service because of their alignment with our spiritual vision.

The Library continues to be an important part of our collective and individual development. During the year new books were added to our collection including some donated by Friends, and some that were chosen by the Library Committee requested by members. To ensure we operate an open and transparent system, the committee have decided to draft an acquisitions policy and work on this has begun.

### Annual Checks

Electrical testing was carried out, the gas boilers serviced and the fire alarm system and fire extinguishers checked.

### Support for Charities

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

In 2024 the Meeting gave £14,800 in grants and subscriptions to Quaker and non-Quaker organisations, this included the proceeds of two fund raising events which together raised £1,300 for Quaker Service. There were in addition five Special Collections out of the six planned (the final one was moved forward to January 2025) raising a total £3,100 for these 5 causes. In addition to regular utility bills and insurance, this year the Meeting paid £1,300 for a defibrillator and storage cabinet.

### Financial Overview

Donations from members and attenders of £16,950 along with income from Meeting House lettings of £12,300 constituted most of our annual income.

Spending on utility bills was £3,500 an increase of 31% on 2023 (£2,100) and this continues to be a significant proportion of our expenditure.

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 £15,000.

Our deposit account ended the year with a balance of £150,000 an increase of 1.7% on 2023. This balance also includes a reserve of £24,000 to ensure we can continue to run the Meeting should there be an unexpected decline in our income (as happened during the pandemic).

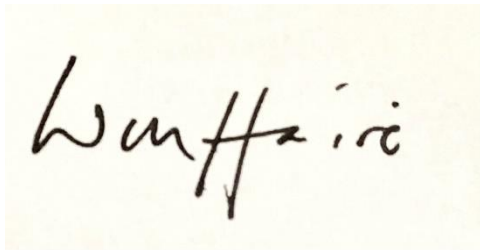
The share price of our investments with the NI Central Investment Fund for Charities continues to increase with the value of our investments rising to £130,700 an increase of 3.4% on 2023.

## 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 and is signed on behalf of the Trustees.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light yellow background. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "Will Haire".

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Will Haire  
Acting Chair of Trustees