

# **ST THOMAS CSI CHURCH BELFAST, UNITED KINGDOM**

Trustees Annual Report for the Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC107503)

**St. Thomas CSI Church Belfast, United Kingdom**

**Charity Name: - St Thomas CSI Church Belfast**

**Charity Number: - NIC107503**

**Worship Address:-**

Drumbeg Parish Church  
The Church of St Patrick's Drumbeg  
Upper Malone Road  
Belfast, BT17 9LE, United Kingdom

**Correspondence Address: -**

41 Beattie Park Central,  
Dunmurry,  
Belfast, BT17 9BE, United Kingdom

**Board of Trustees/Office bearers**

The Charity Trustees in this report year:-

Rev Sabi Mathew (July 2023-)

Mrs. Sosamma Kurian

Mr. Joby Philip Thomas

Mr. Markson Abraham

Mr. Sunil Philip

**Independent Auditor: -**

Mrs. Joshy Jose

Address: 74 Olympia Drive Belfast, BT12 6NH, United Kingdom

**Church Committee**

The Church Committee members of this report year:-

Mrs. Sosamma Kurian - Committee member & Church Warden

Mr. Joby Philip Thomas - Committee member & Secretary

Mr. Markson Abraham - Committee member & Joint Secretary

Mr. Sunil Philip - Committee member & Treasurer

Mr. Vincent P M - Committee member

Mrs. Ashamol Mathew - Committee member & Hospitality coordinator

Mrs. Smitha P Thomas - Committee member

**Choir**

Choir Secretary – Mr. Joby Philip Thomas

**Fire Warden-** Mr. Joby Philip Thomas

**First aiders**

Mrs. Manju P Easow

Mrs Sonia Jeslet Joshy

**Hospitality Coordinators**

Mr. Sunil Joseph

Mrs. Meenu Sabu Maria

Mrs. Tini Cherian

Mrs. Ashamol Mathew

**Organisation Secretaries:-**

The Organisation secretaries of this report year:-

Mrs. Manju P Easow - Women's Fellowship Secretary

Mr. Vincent PM - Men's Fellowship secretary

Kurian S Thoonkuzhy - Youth Joint secretary

**Sunday school Coordinators:-**

Mrs. Prabha Philip

Mrs. Tini Cherian

Miss Rachel Philip (Supporting role)

**Authorised bank Signatories: -**

Mr. Joby Philip Thomas (Secretary)

Mr. Sunil Philip (Treasurer)

Mrs. Sosamma Kurian (Church Warden)

**Bank Details: -**

Account Name: - St. Thomas CSI Church Belfast

Sort Code 20-62-27, Account number 50076678

Bank Address: - Barclays Bank, 17 Castle Place, Belfast, United Kingdom

**Accountant:-**

Westridge Accountants Ltd ,London

**Solicitors:-** (Not formally appointed but used with Trustee approval)

Paul John & Co Solicitors, London

## **ST THOMAS CSI CHURCH 2022 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Trustees present the annual report and the financial activities of the St Thomas Church of South India (CSI) Church for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.

### **Governance and Structure:-**

St Thomas CSI Church is governed by its constitution. The constitution was reviewed in 2016 and the revised document was adopted at the AGM on 8th February 2020. St Thomas CSI Church, Belfast is a recognised and licensed Congregation of the CSI Madhya Kerala Diocese, Kerala, India, in mission partnership with the Drumbeg Parish Church and under the diocese of Down & Dromore, Church of Ireland. Members of the St Thomas CSI Church Belfast and predominantly from the Madhya Kerala diocese of CSI Church in India and hence follows the liturgy, worship orders of the diocese and the guidance issued by the CSI Madhya Kerala Diocese but jurisdictionally under the Church of Ireland Drumbeg Parish Church in the Diocese of Down & Dromore within the context of the wider Anglican Communion.

St Thomas CSI Church is a registered Charity in the United Kingdom to the Charity commission of Northern Ireland (Registration number-107503) and recognised by His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC). Trustees (office bearers) of the St Thomas CSI Church performs the recruitment of the Vicar (Minister) for the congregation, thereby the Bishop of Madhya Kerala diocese deputies the vicar to the congregation and put forward to the Bishop of Down & Dromore diocese Belfast. Upon the completion of the diocesan requirements and the satisfactory Access NI checks, Bishop of Down & Dromore diocese will appoint the vicar by issuing the permission to officiate licenses to carry out the ministerial duties for St Thomas CSI Church within the diocese of Down and Dromore. Northern Ireland and United Kingdom laws are applicable to the Congregation in accordance with the above.

Management of the congregation is administered by the trustees jointly with the Church committee chaired by the appointed Vicar. Trustees of the congregation will be Vicar, Church Warden, Secretary, treasurer and a chosen member from the Church committee whereas Church committee will have other positions for the smooth running of the congregation. The trustees & committee are elected every 2 years in the Annual general body meeting usually held on every March annually where all on full membership or associate membership are eligible to vote. The Trustees and committee are responsible for the day to day management and the maintenance of Finances.

### **Purpose:-**

The purposes of this Church are:

- (i) To enhance the evangelistic and missionary zeal of its members and encourage them to remain as disciples of the Lord Jesus, creatively and actively engaging in God's mission.
- (ii) To serve as a common worship platform for the members of the Church of South India, as well as for those churches in communion with it, to witness Christ among all men, women and children.
- (iii) To share the love of Jesus Christ with the people through proclamation of the good news of Jesus; through community/charity development projects for the marginalised and disadvantaged sections of the people.

### Activities:-

- 1) St Thomas CSI church provides members a safe space to build and practise their faith by engaging in evangelical and missionary church activities
- 2) Members of the St Thomas CSI Church are meeting for the worship activities.
- 3) St Thomas CSI Church also hold other religious activities during every month. Through monthly prayer meetings, we support our members, our own churches and the community.
- 4) St Thomas CSI Church organise and host meetings and events that promote our charitable purposes.

### 2023 Reflection:-

We are in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of existence as CSI Church in Belfast, United Kingdom. By looking back to those years, we recognise how faithful God has been to our congregation. We are amazed at what God has done in and through us these past 15 years, where He has led us, and how He has provided for us through various ways. We strongly believe this was never our plan, but God indeed had a plan for us! It reminds us of **Proverbs 19:21** where it says, ***"Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."*** We have to thank our God for all who served us and keeping as a Church to worship Him in the CSI order of service in Belfast, United Kingdom.

The highlight of this term was the successful registration of St Thomas CSI Church as an employer with HMRC, a bigger step in faith to employ a full time Vicar for the congregation. Appropriate HR systems were implemented, successful registration for the payroll services, appointment of an accountant on behalf of St Thomas CSI Church Belfast and to process the accounting matters including payroll processing are the key initiative happened in 2023 term. Following the successful registration of employer, a recruitment initiative was held to recruit the 1st employee of St Thomas CSI Church Belfast, a full time Vicar to meet the ministerial and pastoral needs of St Thomas CSI Congregation. At the end of the recruitment process and in accordance with the certificate of Sponsorship issued on 26th April 2023 by UK Visa & Immigration, Rev Sabi Mathew was given an offer letter on 8th June 2023 for the 1st term effective from 15th June 2023 to 14th June 2026, and mutually agreed as a start date on 20th July 2023.

Rev Sabi Mathew hails from Pathanamthitta district of Kerala state, India, an ordained Church of South India (CSI) minister within the Madhya Kerala Diocese, Kerala India. Rev Sabi Mathew is married to Mrs Sharon Merin Varghese and they have got a daughter, Miss Stephania Rachel Sabi.

It was an iconic moment for the 15 year history of the congregation to have a full time minister and to all the CSI members in the UK. Congregation unanimously welcomed Rev Sabi Mathew & family on 19th July 2023 at the George Best City airport Belfast.

Access NI Checks were carried out successfully and the permission to officiate was issued by Rt. Rev. David McClay, Bishop of Down & Dromore diocese on 9th October 2023.

On behalf of the trustees, I would like to express our thanks to

- a) Entire trustees and the Church Committee for their faithful service during 2022-2024.

- b) We acknowledge the services of our Vicar Rev Sabi Mathew, his wife Mrs Sharon Merin Varghese and all the support to the congregation. We express our sincere gratitude to Rev Sabi Mathew for leading us in Holy Communion services and other church programs and pray to God Almighty for his blessed ministry.
- c) We also thank Rev Shaiju Kumar for the support during the vicar's vacancy period for leading the congregation for the Good Friday and Easter Holy communion service.
- d) Rev Viji Varghese Eapen and Mrs. Susan George for their visit to our congregation in October 2023.
- e) Rev Willie Nixon, Rector of Drumbeg Parish Church for the support to the congregation.
- f) Drumbeg Church committee of the Drumbeg parish church for allowing us to use the church premises.
- g) We are grateful to the Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr Malayil Sabu Koshy Cherian for all the support and guidance for the congregation during the vacancy period and all interim remote support.
- h) We are also extremely grateful to the Bishop Rt. Rev. David McClay, Down & Dromore diocese and its diocesan officials for the support and guidance for the congregation.
- i) We are also thankful to Mr. Merlin Prasad Alfred, Paul John & Co Solicitors for all the legal guidance for our congregation.
- j) We are also thankful to Mr. Jude Perera of Westridge Accounting firm for all the accounting works for our congregation.
- k) A sincere thanks to Sub committee members Mr. Pradeep Chacko George and Mrs. Susan Mathew along with the trustees of St Thomas CSI Church Belfast for all the works done for the employer registration and the recruitment process.
- l) A sincere thanks to all the members of Sub Committee who helped with the employer registration process.

A special mention of our Church Warden Mrs. Sosamma Kurian for her leading role with advice, chairing the meeting during vacancy and the direction for the church committee and within the congregational activities. We are also extremely grateful to our Treasurer Mr Sunil Philip for his commitment and hard work for the Church even during his busy schedule.

### **Worship Schedule:-**

The congregation normally meet for worship either on Saturday or Sunday and during the mid-week as fellowship gatherings which provides an opportunity for members to meet together for fellowship, to study the scriptures and for a time of prayer. During the calendar year, we had several worship services (Holy Communion Services & Matins), fellowship gatherings in person, Outreach activities and online zoom meetings weekly. Communion Services were held every weekends giving opportunity for every CSI members in UK to attend the CSI order of service either as an in-person service or Zoom online platform. Outreach activities of the congregation is an opportunity to reach out to any CSI members within the UK those you can't travel long distance and to address the pastoral needs of the CSI members in the UK.

| Frequency                         | Activity  |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1st Saturday of the month         | Chain Prayer  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> week of the Month | Women's Fellowship  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> week of the Month | Fellowship Prayer Meeting   |
| All Weekends (Saturday or Sunday) | Holy Communion Service  |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> week of the Month | Sunday school   |
| Outreach Fellowship               | Varies depends on the Individual groups (Children, Youth, Women or Men) |

### Cottage Prayer:-

The cottage meetings are voluntary in the sense that the families have opened their homes for the cottage meeting and therefore the church has arranged the meetings in their homes. There are many families who love to have a cottage meeting at their home, but due to lack of space to accommodate and also for those can't travel, the meetings are also scheduled online. The environment of a home or online, combined with hearing God's word with fellow believers is a great strengthening moment in our Christian life. We had 7 cottage prayer during this report year. Thanks to all for your support.

### Harvest Service:-

Harvest Service has evolved to be an event with great enthusiasm. Harvest service and the fund raising event was organised on Saturday 21st October 2023. We managed to conduct fund raising event after church with good participation from our members. Thanks to all organised and contributed for this event well and helped to raise significant funds during a tough year for the congregation. Thanks to Rev Viji Varghese Eapen and Mrs. Susan George who joined as guest for the Harvest Service.

### Retreat:-

One day Family retreat at St.Thomas CSI Church Belfast,UK on Saturday 30th September 2023. Main speaker for the retreat was Ms. Jesmine George (Family Counsellor), supported by Rev Sabi Mathew and Mrs. Sharon Merin Varghese. A day started with the traditional Indian breakfast, all age singing session, a Youth and adult session on the "Empowerment of the Domestic Church" & group discussion while a parallel session for the kids, a yummy Indian lunch, a platform for the open forum discussion, and to end the day with the dedication and prayer. Supported by many hands to have this retreat an event of a great gathering.

### Carol Rounds:-

Christmas Carol rounds were held on 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2023. It was a blessed fellowship and in-person carol rounds. As part of the Christmas celebrations, this house-to-house carol rounds were arranged and carollers visited homes of our members. It was an opportunity to visit the members home and share the Christmas greetings.

### **Carol Service: -**

Our 2023 Carol Service was on 16th December. Rev Sabi Mathew led the service at Drumbeg Church. Thanks to all the congregation members for their wider participation in the carol service.

### **Chain Prayer:-**

During this prayer event, readings and prayer points are forwarded to the members as we continue to spend time in praying for others and for our church needs. We had 4 chain prayers during the year 2023. A sincere thanks to Mrs Tini Cherian and Ms. Kesiya Justin for coordinating the prayer chain events.

### **Sunday school:-**

Sunday school report prepared by Mrs. Prabha Philip, Sunday school coordinator.

All children from Primary1 to year 12 are welcomed to each Sunday school class which will be held on third Saturday at 10:30am before the Holy Communion Service. We used to have the 'Go Teach' Bible study materials for children; and we do have the Bible reading and reading stories as a group and use the "Printables" as the materials based on the Bible stories for different activities like coloring and crafts for children. During the month of November 2023, Holy Communion Service was led by the Sunday school and children's participation in the service was very much appreciated. The Sunday school also set out an entertainment afternoon for the congregation on that same day. In accordance with the Drumbeg Parish Church Child Protection Policy, both of our Sunday school teachers Mrs. Tini Cherian and Mrs. Prabha Philip have taken the required training and Access NI check. It is great to have Miss Rachel Philip as a teacher supporting in the Sunday school. We as a group try to create the Sunday school time more fun and enjoyable for children so certainly needed encouragement from the congregation to make this possible and going forward.

A sincere thanks for all the Sunday school teachers and helpers.

### **Women's Fellowship:-**

Women Fellowship report prepared by Mrs. Manju Easow, Secretary and Joint Secretary Mrs Sonia Jeslet Joshy. "Come to my children, listen to me. I will teach you the fear of the lord" Psalm 34:11 Praise and thanks to God almighty for another blessed year in the life of the Women's fellowship of St Thomas CSI Church Belfast. Women fellowship continued to meet regularly on the 3rd Saturday of every month under the leadership of Rev.Sabi Mathew and Mrs.Sharon M Varghese, there after it was changed to 1st Tuesday of every month. Women's fellowship members took a lead roll during the service and Mrs Sosamma Kurian gave the message.

A sincere thanks to Mrs. Manju P Easow & Mrs. Sonia Jeslet for coordinating the fellowship events.

### **Youth Movement:-**

Youth movement report prepared by Mr. Kurian Saji Thoorkuzhy, Joint Secretary, Youth movement.



The first youth meeting of the year was held on May 2023, with our then newly appointed Rev. Sabi Mathew. Achan had meeting with the Christian Youth Movement committee members, Kurian S.T the Joint Secretary, Mrs.Meenu Markson the youth co-ordinator, Mr.Markson Abraham the Magazine editor and other youth members. The church youth lead the prayer of the October 2023 month and also the harvest Sunday of the year 2023. I thank God for his presence in all our activities throughout this year. We are few in numbers but the Lord made us come this far. Thank you Jesus

A sincere thanks to Mr Kurian Saji Thoonkuzhy for coordinating the Youth movement events.

### **Choir:-**

We as a congregation values our precious choral tradition which is at the heart of our CSI worship which offers a musical uplift to the Church services and strongly emphasis that the music was an integral part of the worship and not an added extra. In January 2023, few members volunteered to form a new dedicated Church choir and led all the Holy communion Services and the Carol Service. We are reminding the congregation of the importance we place on singing to lift our prayers to God, and look ahead to enable more on the singing of choir to lift the congregation and to fill our church with His praise. Thanks to Mr Joby Thomas and Mr Reuben Mathew Manoj on keyboard for the guidances and help during this year. Seeking your prayers for this newly formed church Choir.

### **Fundraising appeals**

During this report year we had four fundraising appeal in accordance with the trustee approval and with the applicable regulations to top our mission charity account. The time period for this appeal was given below. Thanks to all of your generous contributions that helped to meet few charitable causes in align with our mission.

#### **➤ Fundraising /collection events for 2023**

- ☐ Fundraising event - restricted fundraising to top up the Mission Fund - September 2023- Educational Sunday collection (ED)
- ☐ Fundraising event - Harvest Festival fundraising (unrestricted)-October 2023 (HD)
- ☐ Fundraising event - restricted fundraising to top up the Mission Fund - December 2023- Christmas Mission Donations (CMD)
- ☐ Fundraising event - Carol rounds fund collection (unrestricted) (CR)

#### **➤ Chosen charities for the Mission work in 2023**

- ☐ Bible Society NI
- ☐ Orissa Mission, India
- ☐ UP Mission, India

### **Birthday and Wedding Anniversary Reminders:-**

As a congregation we continued to send greetings on the birthday and wedding anniversaries using the Whatsapp platform for those who all are signed and agreed upon in align with the GDPR regulations.

A sincere thanks to Mrs. Smitha P Thomas for sending the greetings.

### **New Members:-**

We would like to welcome our members to the congregation.

- 1: Mr. Alex.B.Wilson, Mrs. Smitha Raj.S, Mr. Alfie.S.Alex, Mr. Albie. S. Alex
- 2: Mr. Gigi Philip Varghese, Mrs. Subhy Elsa Thomas, Miss.Tanya Mariam Philip and Miss Olivia Susan Philip
- 3: Mr. Alexdas Sathyadas , Mrs.Jancy Ennasmuthu, Mrs. Angelin Jancy Alex and Mrs. Annlin Jancy Alex
- 4: Mr. Reuben Mathew Manoj

### **Remembrance:-**

"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

On Friday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2023, we lost our good and faithful friend Hugh Crookshanks. We cannot go further in this reporting year without mentioning all the committed support by Late Mr. Hugh Crookshanks to St Thomas CSI Congregation. It was a great loss for us, but we continue to cherish. We give thanks to God Almighty for Hugh's life, especially the services and contributions to St Thomas CSI Church Belfast and the love and fellowship shared amongst us.

### **Hospitality:-**

As a congregation we continued to meet after the service and spend time together and enjoyed the fellowship. Thanks to all the congregation members for their willingness to sponsor the food or to prepare the food. A sincere thanks to all the Hospitality Coordinators for coordinating the events.

### **Committee Meetings:-**

The Committee met 7 times during the year to discuss and deliberate on the day-to-day running of the Parish, as well as to execute the decisions of the General Body. The primary purpose of a Church Committee Meeting was to discuss important matters related to the congregation functions. It is an opportunity to plan events, allocate funds, make critical decisions, and discuss any issues or concerns related to the congregation.

### **Financial Commitment & Review:-**

The Congregation's main source of income is members' contribution through the bank transfers or at the offering plates during the service. I would like to report all that we continue to collect the voluntary donation throughout the year 2023. The donations will be paid based on a unique identification number allowing all the members the option to keep anonymous in their giving. I would like to encourage all the Church members to be part of this in support of our financial requirements to continue worship here in Belfast in our own language.

I would like to thank all the congregation members for their contribution and other mission charity appeals during this report year. Our treasurer will provide more insight through his report, though as it is very much encouraging to see the amount collected during this report year.

### Annual General body meeting

Annual general body of the congregation for year 2022 took place on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2023 after Holy Communion service. Report and accounts for the year 2022 were presented and adopted by the congregation.

### Websites & Social Media:-

Our Church gets involved in the websites and social media sites during this digital age. We have a fully paid functional website and the events are published on the website which is widely used by many. Facebook is a very useful way to get information out quickly and to keep people in touch. Remember -anyone can post on Facebook so use it to promote our church and its events. Our Youth fellowship has an Instagram account to promote its events. At the minute WhatsApp is the most effective communication platform used among the Church members with regular updates on the worship services, fellowship prayer meetings, birthdays and anniversaries.

### Data Protection:-

In order to align with the UK General data protection regulation (GDPR) requirements and to comply with the Drumbeg Parish Church requirements we are bound by law to secure our personal data of our members. Personal data relates to a living individual who can be identified from the data. Identification can be by the information alone or in conjunction with any other information in the data controller's possession or likely to come into such possession. The processing of personal data is governed by the GDPR. Hence, we have continued to use the GDPR personal information guidelines which will be applicable to all members of the St Thomas CSI Church. This is a mandatory requirement; hence all members must sign to continue use their personal information within our Church and this is specifically for the birthdays and wedding anniversaries. Secretary will act as the data controller and sole custodian of the church data.

### Responsibilities:-

The trustees are responsible for preparing the annual report and statements of the congregation in accordance with the applicable law and the generally accepted accounting practice within United Kingdom. The trustees are also 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 in 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. 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.

We are looking forward to:

- Our prayer is that every member would be an effective witness enabled by the Holy Spirit to share and proclaim their faith within our wider community
- That there would be a growing hunger to continue the discipleship
- Our youths and children will continue to grow in their faith.
- May the year ahead bring more activities to attract the younger generation.
- That God would be glorified in the congregational life to continue work as a servant act according to our masters will.

We look forward in faith to the year ahead in 2024 and pray that God will continue to bless us, and all that we do would be only for his glory.

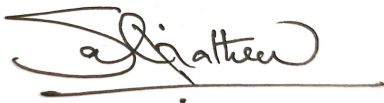
Psalm 28:7 tells us that the Lord is our strength and shield and that our hearts must trust in him. Let us move into the next year knowing God loves us and wants the best for us. We have been so encouraged to see God strengthen and protect us over and over again and lovingly move us forward.

**Date: - 29th February 2024**

**Prepared by Secretary: - Joby Philip Thomas**

Approved by the St Thomas CSI Church committee at a meeting held on 29th February 2024 and signed on behalf by

**Chairperson**

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Sabi Mathew', written over a horizontal line.

Rev Sabi Mathew

**Secretary**

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Joby Thomas', written over a horizontal line.

Mr Joby Philip Thomas