

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) In Ireland, Lisburn Monthly Meeting

Annual Report & Accounts 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, Lisburn Monthly Meeting is governed by its governing document which was agreed by the Meeting on 20th August 2020. The Meeting was registered as a charity by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland on 15th February 2021.

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:

Bronwen S M Haire

Martin K Mail

Philip A McDonagh (Clerk of Trustees)

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.

The Meeting has put in place a data protection policy, based on guidelines from Ireland Yearly Meeting, which is reviewed regularly.

Purposes of the charity

Lisburn Monthly Meeting is a Meeting for Worship of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland that practises in accordance with the principles of the Religious Society of Friends, also known as Quakers.

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 in the geographical area of responsibility of the Monthly Meeting;
- 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 of Preparative Meetings, including assistance to those in need.

At 31st December 2022 we had a total of 207 members as well as 143 regular Attenders.

Our activities during 2022

We are responsible for four Preparative Meetings in South Belfast, Frederick Street Belfast, Lisburn and Coleraine, one Recognised Meeting in Bishop Street, Derry and one Worship Group in Fermanagh. During the year, we also welcomed the establishment of a second Worship Group which meets in Hillsborough Meeting House. Monthly Meeting met on 5 occasions during the year with an average attendance of 20 members. As well as our regular business, we discussed the activity of the

European & Middle East Section of the Friends World Committee for Consultation and our response as a Society to the cost of living crisis.

Our activities in 2022 are reflected in the summary of Annual Reports from these Meetings. Coleraine Meeting captured the underlying theme of all the Annual Reports – “This has been a year of transition from Covid restrictions to comparative normality”. While all Meetings continued to feel the impact of Covid the return to in person Meeting for Worship and Meeting related activities accelerated as the year progressed. The continued access to online worship for Friends who are house bound, medically vulnerable or geographically isolated is a very positive legacy of the pandemic. Both Lisburn and South Belfast Meetings can be attended online. Bishop St meet in person on the first Sunday of the month and hold online Meeting for Worship each third and fifth Sunday. But Covid has also taught us that online is no substitute for in person – after Meeting tea and coffee, shared meals at Coleraine Meeting, wedding celebrations at Frederick St and South Belfast, a coffee morning at Hillsborough, a Meeting of Remembrance and a shared lunch at Bishop St were all celebrated and appreciated this year.

Fermanagh Worship Group had difficulty in finding a new venue following lockdown which resulted in using three different venues before finding a satisfactory place to meet in Enniskillen. The Group meet on the fourth Sunday at 10.30. A small grant from the Jesse Cairns bequest was gratefully received. The Group’s contact person remarked on the determination of attenders to maintain the Group.

South Belfast hopes to resume its programme of visiting the other Meetings within Lisburn MM in 2023 – two or three visitors might go unnoticed in our bigger Meetings but with average attendance of 10 to 12 in Fermanagh and Coleraine it can make a difference.

Some new books have been added to South Belfast’s library. New software will be available shortly that will enable Friends, including those from other Meetings, to browse the Library’s catalogue.

Young people are a vital part of our Meetings. Sunday School restarted at Lisburn in September – it is held once a month with approximately eight children attending. Bible Sunday took place at Friends School in May. In South Belfast in-person sessions for children resumed and now happen every other Sunday. There were visits by young Friends to JYM, Moyallon camps, Yorkshire Holiday School and a European and Middle East Young Friends Gathering.

Frederick St finds itself in the middle of the redevelopment of its neighbourhood by the University of Ulster with high rise buildings going up around the Meeting House. The Development Working Group continued their explorations of working with Quaker Service in redeveloping the Meeting House site. A grant application to Belfast City Council was unsuccessful. In 2023 the Working Group will bring fresh proposals to the Meeting for consideration.

The spiritual growth of Meetings was nurtured in a number of ways:

- Lisburn held monthly prayer meetings.
- Coleraine discussion topics included prayer, sayings of Jesus, testimonies of equality and simplicity.
- Worship Sharing resumed at South Belfast and a book group reading Quaker books started in the autumn.
- Members of South Belfast M&O organised four evening sessions on the themes – God and Faith, Worship, Integrity, Equality and Diversity.

The sharing of our resources be it financial, time or property continued through the year

- Bishop St held special collections for the Red Cross for its work in Ukraine and Quaker Service. Donations were made to IQWFA and Ramallah School.
- Frederick St and South Belfast held a joint craft fair which raised almost £3,000 for Quaker Service and was a great opportunity to strengthen links between the two Meetings.
- South Belfast saw a return to the pre Covid use of its Meeting House. Many Community groups, interest groups and charities use the premises. The use of the building generates welcome funds for the Meeting and raises its profile in the local community. There were six special collections for Quaker and other charities and a donation was made to the Islamic Centre who moved to a new mosque in 2022.
- Coleraine Meeting contributed to Quaker Cottage and Corrymeela and made Christmas donations to the local Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul.

Eco Quakers had a busy year. They brought the Loving Earth Project to Northern Ireland. This is a textile exhibition created by Friends in Britain and Ireland during lockdown. The textile panels were displayed for a week in three venues – The Millennium Court in Portadown, South Belfast Meeting House and The Playhouse Theatre in Derry. Friends from Bishop St and South Belfast played an active role in ensuring the success of the exhibition.

Many local Friends and attenders volunteered at IYM which took place in Belfast in August. It was a source of pride for Coleraine Meeting that this year's public lecture was given by a Coleraine Friend.

Meetings interacted with the wider community by working with other faith groups such as South Belfast's link with Methodists, both local and further afield, and Coleraine is represented in the Corrymeela Support Group and the Coleraine Churches Forum.

Hillsborough and Frederick Meeting Houses take part in European Heritage Open Day when buildings of interest are open to the public. This year Hillsborough was unable to participate because of road closures owing to the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

Lisburn and South Belfast have websites which continue to be very useful as outreach. South Belfast also has a Facebook page.

Lisburn Monthly Meeting had the pleasure of welcoming a new Worship Group in November. Hillsborough Worship Group meet on the last Sunday of the month in the restored Hillsborough Meeting House. It is an active group with up to twenty-five attending Meeting for Worship. The Group is keen to see the Meeting House as a place for both Quakers and the local community.

Frederick St's Annual Report captured the feeling of all the reports – "At a recent Meeting for Worship the various contributions created a theme of "Looking forward with a positive attitude"".

Looking forward

We look forward to God's continued blessing on our Meetings in 2023 and we hope to see growth in Christian understanding and spiritual experience in all our Meetings.

Public Benefit

The trustees of Lisburn Monthly Meeting are pleased to confirm that they have complied with their duty to have regard to the public benefit requirement statutory guidance of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

Our public benefit has been demonstrated in a number of ways over the past year:

- We ensured that our Meetings hold regular Meetings for Worship and these Meetings are open to members of the public as well as our own members and regular attenders – these Meetings provide spiritual nourishment and deepen the Christian experience and understanding of those who attend;
- Using legacy and bequest funds that have been left to the Meeting, we provide financial support to those in need within our Meetings and for other charitable causes;
- We open our two historic sites at Hillsborough and Frederick Street Belfast to the public on European Heritage Day, although it was not possible to open Hillsborough Meeting House this year, due to the death of the Queen.

Financial Review

Our financial statement for the period 1st January to 31st December 2022 is attached to this report and shows that we had a deficit of income over expenditure of £15,001.41 for the year, although this was mainly due to the transfer of £12,000 out of our current account into an investment account in the NI Central Investment Fund for Charities. As a result, our total current funds at 31st December 2022 decreased to £31,059.97 compared with £46,061.38 at 31st December 2021.

We also spent £1,600 on legacy grants to Friends in need of financial assistance and £2,470 on grants from the Jessie Cairns Bequest which supports travel & extension expenses of Members and Attenders and charitable work in Northern Ireland. The final grant of £7,268.01 was made from the Bangor Meeting House Fund to support redevelopment of the building at Frederick Street Belfast.

The value of our investments at 31st December 2022 was £112,783.58 compared with £114,280.23 at the end of the previous year 31st December 2021.

Declaration

This report was approved at the Annual General Meeting on 30th March 2023 and is signed on behalf of trustees.

Philip McDonagh
Clerk of Trustees