

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

## Annual Report & Accounts for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023

### 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 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020. The Meeting was registered as a charity by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland on 15<sup>th</sup> 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 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 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 and a safeguarding policy, based on guidelines from Ireland Yearly Meeting, which are 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 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 we had a total of 208 members as well as 123 regular Attenders.

### Our activities during 2023

We are responsible for four Preparative Meetings in South Belfast, Frederick Street Belfast, Lisburn and Coleraine, one Recognised Meeting in Bishop Street, Derry and two Worship Groups in Fermanagh and Hillsborough. Monthly Meeting met on 5 occasions during the year with an average attendance of 17 members. As well as our regular business, we heard from Quaker Service on their Strategic Review and their plans to move their administrative office into Frederick Street Meeting

House. Hillsborough Worship Group shared their plans for the construction of a new toilet block at the Meeting House to encourage greater usage and we supported their fundraising efforts.

Our activities in 2023 are reflected in the summary of Annual Reports from these Meetings.

Frederick Street has embarked on a programme of significant change in response to the enormous development going on all around them. The first phase of their project was completed in November 2023. The Meeting Room has been upgraded – triple glazing, new lights and radiators, new carpet, wall panelling, and the room has been redecorated. In addition, there are now three unisex toilets, disabled access and baby changing facilities. Phase 2 will see close collaboration with Quaker Service. Quaker Service is fully committed to moving to Frederick Street with the creation of the Frederick St Quaker Hub.

The usual attendance at Meeting for Worship in Frederick St is 20. It was decided to resume the midweek Meeting which is held on the first Wednesday of each month. This Meeting lasts 30 minutes and is followed by refreshments. It has proved popular with visitors.

Coleraine Meeting has quietly flourished this year – two attenders have been welcomed into membership, a member has returned to live in the area and now brings her young family to Meeting, the usual attendance at Meeting for Worship is 15 to 17. The Meeting has organised several enjoyable social events throughout the year, as well as undertaking a variety of activities to support the spiritual life of its Quaker community.

Lisburn Meeting welcomes a small number of members and attenders every Sunday, both at the Meeting House and virtually via Webex. Illness and frailty prevent many members from attending and the Meeting is aware of the lingering effects of the Covid pandemic on patterns of attendance. Sadly a number of deaths of both members and people with connections to the Meeting occurred during the year.

Sunday School takes place on the first Sunday of each month with the usual attendance being five. The children make buns for after Meeting tea and coffee – this hospitality provides an opportunity to socialise. The Meeting maintains its connection with Friends School by organising Bible Sunday in May when school leavers are presented with Bibles embossed with the school crest. Members and attenders have a monthly get-together at a local garden centre which has proved to be very popular and is usually very well attended.

Bishop Street Meeting held a memorial Meeting in February for a dear Friend. Health issues continue to impact on attendance, both in person and via Zoom. A series of discussions entitled “The Way Forward” to explore options that would more equitably share the responsibility of running the Meeting was successful. These deliberations have resulted in a sense of optimism for the future of the Meeting.

South Belfast Meeting continues to grow. Four friends can now be referred to with a capital F and two marriages took place in the Meeting House. Seven After Meeting Conversations were held during the year on Quaker related topics. The Eco Quaker Group has been very active, both within and beyond the Meeting. South Belfast has registered as a designated conservation area for the Irish honeybee. The Worship Sharing Group and the Book Group met monthly.

The children and young people meet every two weeks. Two all-age Meetings were held – the Christmas Meeting explored the parallels between the nativity story and the modern plight of refugees.

The Meeting's finances have been helped by income generated from renting the premises to various groups. Many social events took place – quiz nights, a picnic, fund raising breakfasts and the weekly after Meeting tea and coffee.

The newly fledged Hillsborough Worship Group had an inspiring first year – its members bonding over the task of raising funds for a new toilet block. Fund raising efforts included successful grant applications and a sponsored cycle from Cork Meeting House to Hillsborough. Barry, the intrepid cyclist, was welcomed home to the Meeting House with a celebratory BBQ held in glorious sunshine and attended by approximately 65 people. The BBQ raised an additional £1,000 for the building project. Planning approval is awaited.

Twenty-two people attended the annual visit to the old burial ground in the grounds of Hillsborough Castle. In September the Meeting House was opened to the public as part of European Heritage Day.

All Meetings and Worship Groups gave generously to a range of both Quaker and non Quaker charities. The annual Frederick Street/South Belfast joint craft fair raised money for Quaker Service and the Frederick Street renovation fund. Coleraine Meeting contributed to Quaker Service and the Hillsborough Meeting House Appeal. The Meeting also has a financial commitment to Bishop Street Meeting. Bishop Street Meeting gave financial support to Quaker Service, Irish Quaker Faith in Action, Ramallah School and a local food bank. Lisburn Meeting's charitable donations included Quaker Service, Christian Aid and Storehouse, Belfast. South Belfast Meeting continued its regular donations to a range of charities in addition to having special collections through the year for six charities. The Meeting also held many fund-raising events for Quaker Service, the Syria/Turkey earthquake appeal, those affected by the war in Ukraine and the fund to support Quakers to attend the FWCC gathering in South Africa in 2024.

The use of IT is a positive legacy of the Covid pandemic. Bishop Street, Lisburn and South Belfast now hold blended Meetings for Worship. Some committees and groups meet via Zoom. South Belfast continues to find its website and Facebook page a very useful and effective means of outreach. All forms of electronic communication have been helpful in maintaining contact and helping to build and nourish community.

A quote from the report of the South Belfast Worship Sharing Group to finish

“even texts (from Old and New Testaments) that are very familiar continue to alert us in new ways to the breadth and depth of the relationship that God offers to us, and the varying ways in which we may each be called on to respond”.

### Looking forward

We look forward to God's continued blessing on our Meetings in 2024 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.

### Financial Review

Our financial statement for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 is attached to this report and shows that we had a surplus of income over expenditure of £26,304.96 for the year, although this included restricted funds of £26,546.73 collected towards the construction of a new toilet block at Hillsborough Meeting House. As a result, our total current funds at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 increased to £57,364.93 compared with £31,059.97 at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022.

We also spent £400 on legacy grants to Friends in need of financial assistance and £10,520 on grants from the Jessie Cairns Bequest which supports travel & extension expenses of Members and Attenders and charitable work in Northern Ireland.

The value of our investments at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 was £119,200.86 compared with £112,783.58 at the end of the previous year 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022.

### Declaration

This report was approved at the Annual General Meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2024 and is signed on behalf of trustees.

Philip McDonagh  
Clerk of Trustees