

Ards Evangelical Church
Trustee's Annual Report
Year Ended 31 March 2024



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Administrative Details

Registration

Registered on 16 July 2018 with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland:
NIC 100384.

Contact

Principal Address: 101 Bowtown Road,
NEWTOWNARDS,
Co. Down
BT23 8SL

Website: www.ardsevangelicalchurch.com

Trustees

Mr G Kennedy

Mr J Hamilton

Mr J Melvin

Mr R Stevenson

Mr B Hogg

Constitution and Governance

Ards Evangelical Church or AEC is an independent local church, which was formed in 1995. The church is governed by a constitution document, which was agreed upon at an extraordinary meeting of the church membership on 22 February 2018. This constitution replaced any previous arrangement.

The Elders shall act as the trustees of the Church for the purposes of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 or any statutory re-enactment or modification of that provision and any other relevant legislation. The trustees have legal responsibility for the church and shall meet not less than 3 times a year. There are five elders and six deacons who make up the leadership team for the church.

Purposes of the Charity

The church was set up to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ, both in belief and faith and to announce and act out the good news of the Christian faith as set out in the Church's Statement of Belief by any exclusively charitable means the Elders see fit, primarily but not exclusively in County Down.

Statutory Guidance Statement

The Trustees hereby confirm that this report has been prepared taking regard of "The Charities (Accounts & Reports) Regulations, Northern Ireland 2015" and to the Charity Commission's Public Benefit Requirement statutory guidance.

Fulfilment of Purposes

It is difficult to assess achievements when the church's purpose for existing is spiritual, though the preaching and teaching from God's word is qualitative rather than quantitative in nature, i.e. our role as a church is to share the good news of the Gospel, it is the Holy Spirit who convicts people of their need of Christ.

The number of people attending our services on a Sunday is, on average, around 70, and the various activities that the church provides each week throughout the year are also well supported. We still record and broadcast our services on the internet for those who cannot attend for whatever reason. These broadcasts are not restricted and can be viewed by anyone who wishes to avail of them.

Activities and Achievements

The church runs many activities throughout the week to cater for all age groups and abilities. We have a pastor, who is our only member of staff, but everyone else who steps up to assist or lead an activity is a volunteer. Any adults involved in working with children have been AccessNI checked prior to getting involved.

The Meet & Greet Team

We like to be known as a welcoming church with a warm and friendly atmosphere and it is one of the things that those attending our Sunday services comment on, whether regular church goers or visitors. The Meet & Greet team arrive approximately 30 minutes before the service is due to start to make sure that they are there for the early birds and remain in place until the service has started because it can be very embarrassing, especially if you are a visitor and you get the start time wrong to be left to your own devices and not know where to go. A hug or a handshake can be very encouraging and set the tone for the rest of the service.

Bible Class

The Bible Class takes place on a Sunday morning. The children leave the main service just before the sermon commences and go down into one of the other church rooms. The Bible Class consists of primary school children and they are taught God's word through a variety of activities from Bible stories to craft and games. The class is looked after by 9 adult volunteers who are assisted by 3 teenage helpers and this is carried out on a rota basis so that the leaders and teenagers do not miss out every week on the main Sunday service. In the run up to Christmas the children who attend the Bible Class will perform a nativity play to the whole church, as part of the Sunday service.

Praise Team

Our Praise Team includes not only the musicians and singers that are on the platform but also those operating the computer and sound desk at the back of the sanctuary. We have a group of skilled musicians and singers who are prepared to give up their time and use these gifts that God has given them to lead the church in praise on a Sunday and at other times, if required. The team tries to ensure that all songs are Biblically sound, God glorifying, suitable for corporate worship and complement the message preached that day. At the moment we have 2 guitarists, 2 keyboard players, 1 drummer and 4 singers. Many of the team are multi-talented and can fulfil more than one role, either on the platform or on the sound desk. Again, they operate on a rota basis and they are always on the lookout for more volunteers.

YouthZone

Previously, Ards Evangelical Church was affiliated to the Campaigners Movement, but the decision was taken to operate independently and YouthZone was formed. It is divided up into 3 different age-groups, Minis, Minors and Majors.

Minis

This group caters for those in reception/pre-school up to P3 age and runs on a Saturday morning from 10:30am to 12 noon. Any children in this age range are welcome to attend.

The morning starts with some play time before the children settle down to share their weekly news and listen to a short Bible themed message. Each week through the year the children are taught about a different character from the Bible, to show that God can use anyone, no matter how big, small, old or shy, and that God could use them within their family, friends or school. They also learnt the Lord's Prayer, quite a feat for children so young, they recited it at the parent's event/prize-giving at the church and they also receive a trophy or medal. During the year they also had a picnic at Ward Park and a few parties. There are 4 leaders involved with Minis.

Minors & Majors

Minors caters for the P4 to P7 age group and Majors caters for Year 8 and 9. Both groups meet on a Monday evening from 6:45 to 8:00, using different areas of the church building. Like Minis any children that are in these age ranges are welcome to come along and join in.

Minors

Over the year there was an average of 15 - 20 children in attendance each Monday evening. Each evening consisted of prayer, games, food, badgework, singing, memory verses and a Bible talk focused on the Gospel message. As part of the badgework the children were taught Makaton and at the church carol service they were able to sing and sign in front of the whole church. They were also taught some first-aid. There are 4 leaders and 1 teenage helper involved in Minors.

Majors

Over the year 7 boys have consistently attended Majors and although few in number this has given the leaders the opportunity to get to know them better. Girls are welcome but this year we didn't have any. Each evening starts with prayer followed by a chat, games, badgework and Bible study. Again, sharing the Gospel message is paramount. Badgework has included fitness, baking and gardening. There have been 4 outings, the highlight being attending a Giants ice-hockey match at the SSE Arena and meeting some of the team afterwards.

Toddle-In

Toddle-In is the church's outreach to babies and toddlers along with their parents, guardians or child-minders. It runs on a Tuesday morning and is open to anyone with a baby or toddler.

A group of ladies from the church take the time to set up the sports hall with toys and games for the toddlers and a seating area for the adults to enjoy a cup of tea or coffee. The leaders would then split their time between getting to know the adults and looking after the children. Usually, each week the children have time to play before enjoying a snack followed by an activity such as craft, Play-Doh or nursery rhymes. Chatting with the adults revealed the pressure that the cost-of-living crisis was having on them and their friends and neighbours, so Toddle-In organised a pre-loved clothes sale in October. In fact, so many items were donated that a second sale was organised for Easter. The only cost involved was an entry fee and these proceeds went to three local charities: Tourette's, Elim Foodbank and Forget-Me-Not. They also held a Christmas evening for the adults in the form of a wreath making night and two of the ladies from the church came along and shared some thoughts about the difference that God has made in their lives.

YouthQuake

YouthQuake takes place on a Friday evening and caters for children in the P4 to P7 age group, there are an average of between 30 and 35 each evening. It is an opportunity to provide a safe space for children to enjoy themselves. Again, like our other activities, this is open to any child that falls into the relevant age range.

It is a youth club with various activities from organised games, a Bible talk with time for questions, tuck and some relaxing time. Games vary, so for safety reasons we split the quieter children off into the main sanctuary of the church, which works well and gives children with sensory needs a quieter option. On arrival and departure, the children and their parents are met by two of the volunteers as we seek to build up relationships with not just the children but also their families, to let them put a face to the name. YouthQuake has 8 adult leaders, and 1 younger leader.

Youth Fellowship

The Youth Fellowship caters for teenagers and is an opportunity for them to enjoy a bit of craic and learn about God. It also runs on a Friday evening and averages around 12 young people. It is open to any teenager.

An evening would consist of games, a talk which looks for their input and involvement and then food. We have found that more and more young people are not 'churched' and that we may be the only conduit that they have to hear about the Gospel and that God loves them. It's also concerning to hear about the issues and things that the young people of today are encountering and this has led to many interesting group discussions from autism to cyber-bullying, and this, again, emphasises the importance of creating a safe space for these young people to meet together.

Women in Prayer

This group meets on the first and third Wednesday of each month from 9:30 to 10:30am to pray for all the families in the church and the issues that they face, for the Pastor, the Church Elders and Deacons, the local schools and their teachers, the church's children and youth work, other Christian workers and any visitors that come along to the church services. They would encourage anyone that needs prayer to let them know and they will pray for that issue or situation. You don't have to be too specific as God knows who you are and what the need is. A small donation is collected each week and at the summer break this is given to a chosen charity. There are currently 7 ladies who meet but there is always room for more. Prayer is the powerhouse of any church.

Ladies Breakfast & Bible Study

This group meets on the third Saturday of each month from September through to June in the church. They enjoy a chat over breakfast from 8:30 to 9:00am followed by a conversational Bible Study from 9:00 to 10:00am. Certain ladies in the group will carry out the role of leading and then everyone else has the opportunity to add their thoughts or ask questions or just sit and listen. The ladies agree on a topic or book to study and away they go. There are approximately 12 ladies who meet but any lady is welcome to join with them, whether you have been a Christian for a long time, are new to the faith or are still seeking, you will be made very welcome.

Men's Breakfast & Bible Study

This group meets on the first Saturday of each month from September through to June in the church. They enjoy a chat over food at 8:00am followed by a time of Bible Study. Again, like the ladies it is a conversational study where certain men will lead and then everyone else has the opportunity to add their thoughts or ask questions or just sit and listen. This year the men ran a Discipleship Explored course on a monthly rather than a weekly basis. It is a great time of fellowship for the men both young and old. It is an opportunity to share together and get a better understanding of God's word. Some men have moved on but we have gained others and there are between 10 and 14 men meeting together but more are welcome.

Catering & Special Events Committee

This team would be involved in the provision of refreshments or meals as required within the church including tea/coffee and biscuits before the Sunday morning service through the cold winter months, provision of tea/coffee and sandwiches, buns etc as a supper after our monthly evening services and the church Christmas dinner/BBQs and specific occasions or events. If someone associated with the church is unwell or has just gotten home from hospital the ladies will organise a rota of meals until the person is back to reasonable health.

Mission

During the Summer months the church sent a team to go out and assist Christian outreach in Aberdeen, Scotland and one of our deacons returned to help out in Cairo, Egypt.

The Aberdeen team had 9 members, 6 men and 3 women, and they went over to help with the outreach week in the Tillydrone estate with Donside Community Church. It was a week of working with babies, toddlers, children, teenagers, men and women all from various backgrounds and countries who had set up home in the area. The week was a great success and it was hoped that the local church would continue to make a difference both spiritually and physically in the area.

This year only one member of last year's team was available to head out to Egypt and again he took extra bags with him of clothing to assist Youth for Christ as they work with the local church, children's camps and soccer academies sharing the gospel through sport while encouraging local church workers. He also worked with a refugee community in Cairo.

Small Groups

The church operates three small groups, two in Newtownards and one in Ballywalter (to cater for those living down the Ards Peninsula). They operate every other week on a Wednesday or Thursday depending on which group you attended, the church prayer meetings were held on the intervening weeks on a Wednesday night. The groups were hosted by couples in the church who were willing to open their homes and they were started to encourage people to study God's word, pray together in smaller groups and to fellowship together. All of the questions were based on the sermon from the Sunday prior to the groups meeting. They have proved to be very successful and are well attended. More people are welcome to join and we will source more hosts to accommodate them as and when required.

Working with the Local School

We have been working closely with the local primary school, Loughries Integrated Primary School, in the village in various ways. Our Pastor is invited to speak at the school assemblies to both children and adults. The school use our sports hall for some of their activities and they also use our main sanctuary, sound equipment etc to put on special parents' events throughout the year, e.g. Harvest Service, Christmas Nativity, Presentations, and the school leaving services (graduations).

The children also come along to our youth activities, especially YouthQuake. Some of the teachers also make use of the church car park.

The school is just a short walk away from the church and it has been good to see this bond of friendship growing.

Outreach to the Local Village

Over the years we have continued to reach out to the local village and encourage them to visit the church. We have run a BBQ and Fun Day as well as giving out gifts and invitations to special services at Easter and Christmas and praise God we have had some success.

JAM Club

JAM Club, (Jesus And Me) is the Bible Holiday Club run by the church. This year it ran in the evenings from 21 August 2023 to 25 August 2023. The theme was Treasured, how we are treasured by God.

It caters for children who are going into P1 up to Year 9 and it is open to anyone who falls into that age range. This year there were on average between 75 and 90 children each evening with around 30 to 35 leaders looking after them.

Each evening starts with singing and a memory verse followed by a short drama and then a Bible talk. The children were then split up into groups according to their ages and play games and have a snack of juice and biscuits before everyone returns to the main hall for more singing to finish off the evening.

Due to the early evening start some of the volunteers were coming straight from work, so a light meal was also prepared for them.

Risk Management

Financial

The Trustees are content with the financial results for the year. We sustained a small loss this year but we remain in a positive position despite the rise in costs for most things.

The church relies almost exclusively on income received from the freewill offerings from the church family. This is given as an outworking of their faith to maintain the church activities and the upkeep and general running of the premises, as well as supporting those less fortunate than themselves. Generating income is not the main purpose of the church. Any monies spent must have an invoice or receipt to provide a paper trail of expenditure.

The independent examiner did not raise any issues in relation to our finances and is always available to provide guidance to the church on financial matters. Appropriate measures are in place regarding the handling of cash and the use of the church accounts.

Reputational

A major part of the work carried out by the church is working with children and young people and therefore, the church is committed to the nurturing, protection and safe-keeping of all of those entrusted into our care.

On behalf of the church, the elders are committed to supporting and training all those who are working with children and young people. All those who are working in this area are required to be cleared by AccessNI before they can get involved.

We have two volunteers who have been designated to look after this area and who provide the necessary courses as and when required.

Some of our volunteers have also undertaken a St. John's Ambulance First Aid course to try and ensure that in the event of an incident assistance can be provided whilst waiting for the relevant medical professional to arrive. Our aim is that at least one volunteer has undertaken this training within each of our activities.

The Trustees of Ards Evangelical Church submit their Annual Report.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:



(Brian Hogg)

Appendix

Ards Evangelical Church (AEC)

Code of Doctrine

What we believe.

1. God

There is one God who has always existed in three equal but distinct persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is unchangeable in His holiness, power, justice, wisdom and love. He is the almighty Creator, Saviour and Judge who sustains and governs all things according to His sovereign will and for His glory.

(2 Cor. 13 v 14, 1 Pet. 1 v 2, 1 John 5 v 7, Is. 33 v5-6, Gen. Chaps. 1 – 2)

2. The Lord Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, and lived a sinless life of obedience to the Father. He taught with authority and all His words are true. On the cross He died in the place of sinners, bearing God's punishment for their sin, redeeming those who trust in His sacrifice by His blood. He rose from the dead and in His resurrection body ascended into Heaven, where he is seated at God's right hand and intercedes for His people in the presence of the Father.

(Matt. 1 v 18-25, Acts 2 v 22-36)

3. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has been sent from Heaven at Pentecost to glorify Christ and to apply His work of salvation. He gives a true understanding of the Scriptures and He indwells all believers. We believe that God the Holy Spirit must work in man before he can enter into salvation. He leads the sinner to an awareness of his sinfulness and brings him to repentance and trust in Christ. The Holy Spirit convicts and regenerates the sinner. It is the sinner's responsibility to yield to the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also sanctifies, illuminates and comforts those who believe in Christ. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to develop in the believer's life the fruits of love and holiness.

(Acts 2 v 1-21, John 16 v 7-15, Heb. 2 v 3)

4. The Bible

God has revealed Himself in the Bible, which consists of the Old and New Testaments alone. The Scriptures do not merely contain the Word of God, but every Word was inspired by God through human authors, so that the Bible, as originally given is in its entirety the Word of God, without error and fully reliable in fact and doctrine. The Bible alone speaks with final authority and is always sufficient for all matters of belief and practice.

(Matt. 4 v 4, 2 Tim. 3 v 16, 2 Pet. 1 v 20-21)

5. Satan

We believe that Satan exists as an evil spirit, that he is the originator of sin, the arch enemy of God and man, the deceiver and enslaver of mankind and is set on the ultimate damnation of every person. We believe that Satan and his angels will be committed to the eternal lake of fire.

(Matt. 4 v 1-11, 2 Cor. 11 v 3, 14-15, Rev. 20 v 10)

6. The Human Race

We believe that God created man, perfect in His own image, but, being tempted by the Devil, man, by his own free choice, disobeyed God and became a sinner, guilty and totally depraved before God. Man's whole nature is now perverted by sin and his fellowship with God is broken, thereby incurring physical, spiritual and eternal death. Every person is therefore under the condemnation of God and needs to be born again, forgiven and reconciled to God in order to know and please Him.

(Gen. 3, Rom. 1 v 18-32, John 3 v 1-21)

7. Salvation

We believe that Salvation is by the Grace of God; God in His Grace forgives and reconciles to Himself all who turn to Him in true repentance and who trust in Christ's atoning death. Salvation is by faith alone in the all-sufficient sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. God imputes the righteousness of Christ Himself to believers and adopts us as His own children.

(Eph. 2 v 8-9, Rom. 3 v 25, Rom. 4 v 5-8, Rom. 8 v 15-16)

8.

a. The One Church

We believe that all who have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and upon whom God has bestowed His righteousness as a free gift, belong to Christ. They alone are rightly called Christians. They alone are members of the one universal and eternal Church of Christ.

(Eph. 1 v 7, Acts 11 v 26)

b. The Local Church

We believe that each local Church is a fellowship of believers, called out from the world, separated unto the Lord Jesus Christ, voluntarily associated for the ministry of God's Word, the mutual edification of its members, the propagation of the Gospel and the administration of the ordinances. We believe it is an independent body, exercising its own divinely awarded gifts, precepts and principles under the Lordship of Christ, the great Head of the Church. True fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the Gospel. The local Church has no need of, nor should it acknowledge, any other authority than that of Christ. We believe in the entire separation of Church and state.

(1 Cor. 12 v 4-11, 27-31, 1 Cor. 14 v 3, 2 Cor. 6 v 14-18, Eph. 4 v 11-15)

9.

a. Baptism

Baptism is an outward symbol of the inward change that has been effected in the life of believers having trusted Christ as Saviour. Christ commanded the act of Baptism. It also symbolises dying with Christ and rising with Christ to a new life. It does not produce, of itself, any spiritual change in the one baptised. We believe that those being baptised should be believers and the method used should be total immersion, never sprinkling. Anyone wishing to be baptised should make it known to an Elder or Deacon. They will be given a copy of the leaflet "Baptism Explained".

(Matt. 28 v19-20, Rom. 6 v 3-4)

b. Infant Dedication

Infant dedication is a simple service of thanksgiving to the Lord for the gift of the child and for safe arrival. At this service the parents and the congregation are charged publicly to be faithful in the caring for the child's spiritual welfare as well as his/her physical welfare. The dedication does nothing for the child spiritually or eternally, but is an open acknowledgement to God for His unending goodness. Anyone wishing to have a child dedicated should inform an Elder or Deacon.

10. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is the commemoration of Christ's sacrifice offered once for all. We at AEC celebrate communion every Sunday. As believers we are commanded to remember the Lord's death until He comes. Christians are exhorted to examine themselves, so that all known sin should be previously confessed, and any animosity or ill-feeling between individuals be put right and a proper relationship restored. This enables us to partake of the emblems in a right attitude and responsible manner. Our conscience should not condemn us at the Lord's table.

(1 Cor. 11 v 23-31, 1 John 3 v 20-21)

11. The Future

The Lord Jesus Christ will return in the air for His Church. Christians are instructed to look for His appearing not for the grave, and live holy lives in anticipation of His coming. There are many other prophetic events, and the Scriptures further reveal that there will be resurrections of the just and the unjust. The unjust will be sent to eternal punishment (Hell) and the just will be welcomed into a life of eternal joy (Heaven) in fellowship with God.

(1 Thess. 4 v 13-18, 1 Pet. 1 v 13-15, John 5 v 25, 28-29)

12. AEC Core Values

- ❖ Prayer
- ❖ Bible-centred Preaching / Teaching
- ❖ Evangelism
- ❖ Discipleship
- ❖ Fellowship
- ❖ Godly Leadership.