

Saintfield Parish Church Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2022

The Trustees present the Annual Report and Statements of Receipts and Payments and Assets and Liabilities for Saintfield Parish Church for the year ended 31 December 2022.

Objectives and Activities

The charitable purpose of the Church of Ireland is the advancement of religion.

The principal function of Saintfield Parish Church is to support the advancement of the Christian religion by promoting, through the work of the Saintfield Parish Church the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. Being open to and engaging with society as a whole and offering support for those needing help are fundamental to the practical delivery of the benefits of Christianity.

As a result of activity in the pursuit of the advancement of the Christian religion, the Saintfield Parish Church has custody of property and of records, materials, and artefacts of significance to the cultural and religious heritage and maintenance of which is undertaken by the Select Vestry of the Saintfield Parish.

Achievements, Performance & Public Benefit



Someone today posted on Facebook a photo of the Saintfield Parish Vicarage when it was first built. The age of the photo doesn't really do justice to a building that in the late 1950's was very ahead of its time. The size of the building, the dark wood and white paint finish, the setting of the house just close enough to the Parish Church to feel connected and walkable to, and yet just far enough outside the village to have some sense of separation, is a powerful testament to the then Select Vestry and congregation who in faith, chose to make this happen.

Such vision and commitment to the future of their Parish was far reaching. It recognised the Vicarage not just as a place that would be a family home to Rev Donnelly and subsequently Canon Woodrow, Rev Delemere and latterly myself and our family, but to identify it as a place of service and blessing for everyone who would enter it.

Over the 70 years, this Vicarage had some physical additions as well as inner enhancements, but the past year has witnessed a major renovation planned for and now in full flow since Nov 2022. The essential work clarified by the Diocesan Council was developed through the Select Vestry's choice to: expand the living, kitchen, utility and bedroom areas; widen the entrance to the driveway; remove the outside cladding; replace all the windows as well as insulate the building more efficiently. Seeing our Select Vestry and congregation step out in faith is once again a testament to a vision for Saintfield Parish's future, providing not just a family 'home' but a place of service and blessing for all.

In many ways, this vision coming after the renovation of Parish Hall has been empowering. It reflects the simple belief that as God amazingly provided enough for the Parish 'Hall for All' project, that God always does provide where there is need. He never lets us down in making our vision a reality and answering need. For my Annual Review, I want share four lessons from our Vicarage renovation that aptly reflect the spiritual renovation of our Parish over the past 12 months from April 2022 – March 2023 that will lead us on in our journey into the years ahead.

Saintfield Parish Church

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2022 (continued)

1. The Vicarage tells us that nothing ever stays the same.

Our Vicarage in its original shape, decor, and function in 1950's was such a blessing for the parish and its subsequent vicars, but the truth is 'that nothing ever stays the same'. Change had to happen to the building to ensure that both inside and outside would be fit for purpose for now and what the future Parish needs the Vicarage to be.

In our Church mission and ministry, we also have discovered (and no more so than over the past 3 years) 'that nothing ever stays the same'. COVID dramatically re-shaped our mission and ministry, congregational worship, community service and our place within the Saintfield community. It accelerated the trend of disengagement amongst youth and young families that were already impacting our growth and everything came to a stop!! It was a stop that could not be reversed and highlighted the powerful truth that 'nothing ever stays the same'.

Over the past year, we have gradually, slowly, prayerfully been on the journey of renovating our spiritual parish life. We have asked God to help us see such change as greater opportunities for the present and future, rather than being a source of fear and stagnation.

To initiate spiritual renovation amongst youth, the Select Vestry prioritised a part-time youth ministry position. After a thorough recruitment process, Rose Armstrong arrived. Rose has brought so much to us in her skill-set, energy, personal engagement and a vibrant Christ like faith. Through her development and leadership of REFRESH on Sunday Mornings at 11.00am, youth discipleship of Form 1+ on Sunday nights, her involvement and partnership with Saintfield High School and Academy Primary School, Rose serves and blesses us and our community. Our Jesus family has grown bit by bit and the potential development of the youth role is being further explored.

We are very thankful for Rose, but we must address the lack of volunteers. We need many more people of all ages who will invest a little more of their time to help grow the future generations of our Saintfield Parish family. Rose then can continue to grow God's vision for us, expanding her influence, commitment and availability to all young people both in the Parish and the community. Thank you so much to all our present young leaders and to the invaluable help of Sarah, Craig and Wenda, without whom, our spiritual renovation work with Rose would be very much less than what it is at present.

Renovation of our Sunday Worship has settled into a new pattern and gradually and slowly, bit by bit more people are coming back to their spiritual home. It is hard and I know for quite a few folk, it has been a real stepping out to re-start church. So thank you for making that decision. We have also (with permission from the Diocese) just introduced the common chalice again at Holy Communion. We have a good balance between using it and/or the small plastic cups of wine. People in Communion can choose their preference. Services at 10.00am are now recorded and edited but there isn't a great number viewing them online. However, those who do watch them, find connection to the Saintfield Parish Jesus family and that is a blessing and worth all the effort.

Other changes have grown specific roles such as the 'Parish Visitor'. Dawn Gordon is now engaging with people on behalf of the Vicar (not to replace his pastoral responsibility, but to add to regular contact). This offers another real blessing and ensures that in our 'family', people know they are not forgotten.

Our Vicarage renovation reveals 'that nothing ever stays the same'. For our future Jesus mission and ministry, such change caused by COVID is the greatest opportunity to rebuild who we are in Christ. This is the opportunity for them to know that we as a Jesus family, exist as a place and people of service and blessing for them no matter who they might be. Let our spiritual renovation as a Church and Jesus family continue in 2023 and beyond.

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2. The Vicarage tells us that renovation relies on 'hidden' work to achieve results.

Look at a recent photo of the front of the present Vicarage and while you see work happening, the real work is at the back and within, hidden from sight. Mission and ministry in Saintfield Parish over the past year has demonstrated the same. So much happens that isn't seen just by looking at the front of our Church and its position on the Main Street. So, for example:



You don't see out front Pitter Patter on Mondays with Sarah McCarter and her team making young babies and carers welcome and included, to the point they have a waiting list;

You don't see easily Wednesday Welcome being a place of connection and belonging with the commitment of its leaders offering support and friendship to so many;

You don't see all the hidden work of Sally, Ian, and William in the Church Office and yet without their personal abilities and attention to administration, the church and hall premises as well as the parish graveyard, everything would be so much harder to keep going;

You don't see the hidden Select Vestry at monthly meetings in discussion to arrive at important decisions to serve and bless as a parish. The hidden figures of Caroline as Hon. Treasurer (with Jean as Assistant Treasurer) and of Stephen as Hon. Secretary, all work hard to keep the information up to date, making it understandable to empower the Select Vestry to achieve results as Trustees.

You don't see the hidden Select Vestry Safeguarding team led by Kate. This work is sensitive and necessary and we are fortunate to have such people who are committed to its role and confidentiality.

You don't see the Church Wardens setting up early the Worship every Sunday. Linda and David have been super and dedicated over 4 years, along with Donna assisting/leading at 8.30am and Denis always opening church for everyone. We are also thankful for Canon Ian McDonald and Alan Higgins who come to regularly share God's Word for us and lead worship;

You don't see Michael up in the organ loft or Jackie on the PowerPoint (fighting with the Vicar in controlling the slides 😊)

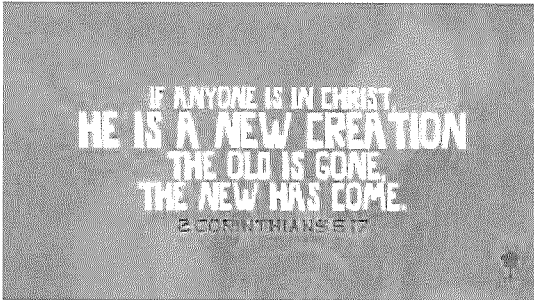
What else do you not see, hidden but working to renovate our Saintfield Parish mission and ministry?

You don't see fully the Mothers' Union with Marion and her committee serving and blessing its members and the greater community as well as their support of people like June as All Ireland President of Mothers' Union. You also don't see the new Men Alive group as it grows connection amongst all men in the church and the community, the dedication and hard work that seek to renovate relationships.

So yes, our Vicarage is being renovated through people whose work cannot openly or fully be seen. Contractors working hidden within the building or behind the front of it through ME Crowe, as one big team, changing the Vicarage according to one big plan. You don't see them at work and yet the results are there.

Saintfield Parish is likewise being renovated as a Jesus family to offer Christ like people of service, blessing and love. But the scale of the work is immense and hidden from so many. To all those who work as one big team in the Parish, to those who also pray hard for all this work for maybe they cannot physically be involved as they once were, to all of you, thank you! And to those who are being stirred by God to become more involved in whatever way, join the team!!

3. The Vicarage tells us that renovation reveals that something 'new' is happening.



It is interesting the number of people who have commented to me on what 11 Lisburn Road is beginning to look like.

Despite all the mess, they see a 'newness' happening that doesn't take away from what the Vicarage originally was, it only adds to it. The original shape of the Vicarage stays the same. Its site remains unchanged looking towards Saintfield through the same vantage point. The driveway although clabbered with mud and muck is still there and will be used again in the same way to approach the Vicarage.

The garden will become 'new' as grass (and moss) will naturally grow again. Even the bare stripped Vicarage walls will look as 'new' when repaired and painted with slightly new colour defining and freshening their appearance.

The point is, that when people see our Vicarage and it's 'newness', their curiosity is aroused. Does such curiosity change their lives and their eternal destination? Probably not. (Hopefully they keep their eyes on the road 😊)

As our Parish spiritual renovation progresses to serve, bless and love others in a very different way to that of the world, I wonder if we can pray that it might cause more people to see and need something new for themselves? That something more needs to be found for their life and death? That their hearts need renovation?

As much as the Vicarage may make people in cars slow down and look as they pass by, when it comes to our Jesus' mission and ministry, others in your family, friendship groups, workplace, place of education will also only slow down and look if they see something new of Jesus and his Holy Spirit in you and me. Only if they see and experience a discernible newness in our own Jesus faith, will their curiosity stop and ask you 'why?'

Why do you go to worship regularly rather than just at Christmas or Easter? Why is your heart's renovation not just concerned with 'religion' or 'church going' but seems to make your life alive with a joy and freedom that serves, blesses and loves? Why can they not know such renovation as well? Why can their life not be found in the same way?

As part of our future spiritual renovation, I am planning and praying for a parish mission in October 2023 with Rev Willie Nixon from Drumbeg. The Mission is named 'FOUND', for in Jesus, being found is freedom, hope and where renovation begins. Willie and I are in conversation as to what this might look like with different people sharing over 4 days in October what being 'FOUND' in Jesus has changed in them, renovating their hearts for God.

It is my deepest hope and prayer that 'FOUND' will both deepen our Jesus faith and commitment as well as empower us to invite others to let God become more for their life and death. COVID raised so many questions and many are seeking renovation. 'FOUND' will be the opportunity to share answers that we as Jesus Family believe and trust in as our story. Please pray for this time, for me and Willie as we move things on.

In September, there will be a course to help us talk about our faith, its newness and power and the answers of God's plan for a hopeless world. Answers that offer 'new' things to happen for life, death and beyond. I hope as many people as possible will sign up and take part.

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4. Finally, the Vicarage tell us that renovation reveals there is always a bigger plan.

So, nothing ever stays the same. What is hidden always achieves results. Newness will let make people stop, look, wonder and ask questions. All of this happens because there is a bigger plan in place. A plan that amazes those who are found by it. A bigger plan that makes sense of it all. Our Vicarage will be finished at the end of June. The bigger plan will produce the result. The Vicarage will not be totally perfect, but it is our perfect gift to the present Clergy family and the ministers who will follow. More than that, it is the best gift we can offer to God and the future generations of Saintfield Parish.

It is however only part of an even bigger plan of a Jesus renovation for the heart of our parish and for Saintfield's transformation.

The Vicarage renovation in a powerful way, tells the story of this bigger plan of God for us as a Jesus family, people or person. It is a plan that your £10 extra a month or that one off gift is now making real, not just to see the vicarage re-born, but our own church life and witness. Please offer this £10 a month if you haven't already. The bigger plan cannot happen unless we sacrifice so that we can do good and please God.(Hebrews 13:16). We together can provide a secure future for Saintfield Parish and the generation to come, who in 65 years from now, will thank you as much as we thank the people of faith from 65 years ago, who chose then to not just provide a new vicarage, but a new future that has blessed us now.

I can't thank you enough for the new Vicarage. We as a family will be blessed to live in it and enjoy. But as much as we as a Parish have been empowered to bring about such earthly things, I can't thank you enough for your commitment to spiritually renovating our mission and ministry for the things of Heaven and of Jesus.

Let 2023 offer us as Saintfield Parish the greatest opportunity to grow our Jesus family, serve more completely the whole community and bless unconditionally all who today need to be 'FOUND' through God's loving compassion and mercy. Let us allow the even bigger plan to make God even more real in our hearts renovated for him, that our Jesus family can be the renovated heart for all Saintfield and beyond. Amen

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Financial Review

Parish receipts remained at a similar level to 2021 and totalled £143,978. The Receipts and Payments Account for year ended 31 December 2022 shows £100k more, however this is the divestment from RB General Unit Trust (NI) for work on the Vicarage. Free Will Offering has been comparable and we continue to see a small rise in Parishioners giving through standing order. This helps with our budget and to forecast future cash flow. Graveyard income has remained steady at £10k approx.

Parish Hall income has again risen in 2022 by £1250. We have seen several new groups over the last year and slots are continuing to fill up. This is very encouraging.

Investment valuation remained steady in Q1 of 2022 but took a dive in Q2 and Q3. Thankfully they regained some value during Q4. The value of the Parish investments closed at £601k - an overall loss of £38k approx. from December 2021. Similarly, to the receipts above, the Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31 December 2022 on the accounts show a closing value of £501k. The difference is the divestment for the vicarage. This was transferred to an RCB deposit account in December 2022. We do not include this £100k divestment for the comparison as it was done so late in the year. We did not withdraw any capital during the year, nor did we add to it. Any fluctuations were due to market performance and conditions. Income from these investments amounted to £29,035 which has kept the Parish in an operating surplus. We will monitor the level of the dividend decrease throughout 2023 as capital from the investments is used for essential investment in the Vicarage refurbishment.

Total payments for the year have risen substantially. Salary costs being the biggest increase, the Employment Allowance credit has been depleted therefore we have been paying over PAYE and NI. We have also taken on our youth worker and are not receiving any COVID furlough receipts as we had in 2021. The cost-of-living crisis has had a negative effect on our energy costs as everyone is aware of. As costs remain high we encourage Parishioners to give extra in their monthly giving.

Saintfield Parish have a dual control mechanism in place for both receipts and payments. Monthly reconciliations are performed and cross-checked ensuring financial allocations are correct. The financial position is presented to Select Vestry at each meeting and examination encouraged.

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Going Concern

The Trustees have reviewed the budgets for the year ahead and are satisfied that there are adequate funds in place to ensure that the Parish can continue its activities and the Financial Statements for the year ended 2021 can be signed off as a going concern.

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing Document and Constitution of the Charity

Chapter III of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland governs Parishes and Parochial Organisation. The Select Vestry members are the Charity Trustees.

Recruitment and Appointment of Select Vestry (Trustees)

All members of the Church of Ireland who are over the age of 18 and are either resident within the Parish or live elsewhere but have been accustomed members of the congregation for at least three months, may register as members of the General Vestry of the Parish, allowing them to attend and vote at meetings of the General Vestry and to stand for election to the Select Vestry. Meetings of the General Vestry are held at least once a year. The Select Vestry is elected as part of this General Vestry meeting. The Select Vestry will hold their positions for a period of one year. Select Vestry members may be re-elected annually and there is no limit on the number of terms which may be served.

Pay and remuneration

The Vicar is paid according to the Diocese of Down and Dromore grading of Saintfield Parish as a 'C' Parish along with the Locomotory and Office expenses as passed by General Synod 2021.

Organisational Structure

The Select Vestry is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Parish. The Select Vestry consists of the member of the clergy serving in the Parish, two Church Wardens, two Glebe Wardens and generally not more than twelve other members of the General Vestry elected at the Easter General Vestry.

The Select Vestry is chaired by the incumbent (Vicar) of Saintfield Parish. Select Vestry members are responsible for making decisions on matters of general concern and importance to the Parish including deciding how Parish funds are to be applied. They also are responsible in establishing and maintaining the vision of the Parish, counselling the Vicar in regard to spiritual direction as well offering oversight regarding to the management of staff, safeguarding trust and property concerns.

The Select Vestry meets at times fixed by the members or by the Diocesan Synod. Special meetings may be convened at any time by the Chairperson or the Church Wardens. In 2022 the Select Vestry met on 8 occasions. The average attendance was 73%.

Compliance with Public Benefit

The Parish has given careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the actives entered into during the year have helped to achieve the Parish's objectives and activities, as well as providing public benefit.

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Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the Statement of Receipts and Payments and Statement of Assets and Liabilities in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

The law applicable to charities in Northern Ireland with Income of less than £250,000 requires the Trustees to prepare a statement of receipts and payments and a statement of assets and liabilities for each financial year.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the Parish's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the assets and liabilities of the Parish. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Parish and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Signed on Behalf of the Trustees



Rev. Chris Pollock



Mr Stephen Erskine



Mrs Caroline Kearney

Date: 20 March 2023