

## Saintfield Parish Church

### Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023

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 2023.

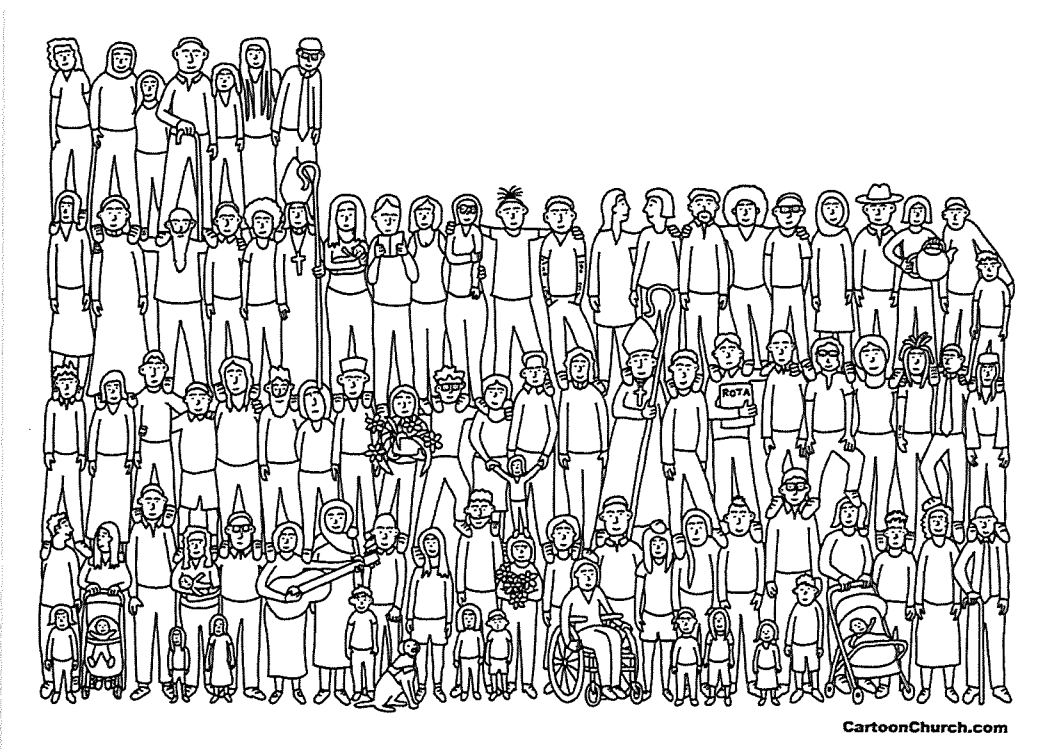
#### Objectives and Activities

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



<sup>4-8</sup> Welcome to the living Stone, the source of life. The workmen took one look and threw it out; God set it in the place of honor. Present yourselves as living stones for the construction of a sanctuary vibrant with life, in which you'll serve as holy priests offering Christ-approved lives up to God. 1 Peter

2:4-8 The Message

I like Dave Walker's cartoons that you will find in the 'Church Times' Newspaper and no more so than the one entitled "We are Church". I have bought the Cartoon Church License to use his cartoons but this one is significant for us now. It shows how alive any Church is in its shape, strength shining outwards when every person is a living stone. When each person offers their 'Christ approved lives to God' then Church becomes authentically. This is the truth that Saintfield Parish has grown through over the past year.

## Our shape as a living Church

Coincidentally, Dave Walker's shape of his cartoon Church is identical to the physical shape of our own in Main Street. It's like everyone in Saintfield Parish being joined together in a unique way, held together by those around us through our faith in Jesus. Church is being together, no matter who we are, what we look like, where we have come from, how long Saintfield Parish has been our home or how recent or from when Jesus became our Lord.

So how has our shape changed over the past year? Well, we have the addition of a new partnership with La Redenta Church, La Paz, Bolivia and Pastor David. Through SAMS Ireland, this partnership will be a great encouragement as we will both pray for and encourage each other as we share who Jesus is in our communities. Over the next 5 years, we hope to visit each other through SAMS and their Mission Co-ordinator's Stephen McElhinney's guidance.



Sadly, in the last year our shape as a Church changed a little as we witnessed the passing of folk who have now entered that closer presence of Jesus. The shape of our Church will in the future see such missing spaces, so we always need to invite people back to Church and take up their place with us in regular Worship and Mission.

It has been a blessing in 2023 to welcome Karen, Alice, Liz, Cecil, Margot, Kirsty, Loren, Lucas, Noah, Isla, Adam, Amy, Alice

with Ava who was baptised on Mother's Day 2024.

One loss to us last year was Rose Armstrong as our Youth Worker who moved on in her calling last July to 1<sup>st</sup> Bangor Presbyterian. Rose exemplifies the great shape of a Jesus' discipleship, prayer, commitment. Her personality and giftings engaged all who met with her. We miss her in her role.

The Vestry have decided to use a period of reflection and prayer before exploring a Youth/Family resource again. The bishop has indicated that he will also seek to identify someone who might be an addition to Saintfield Parish for this ministry.



## Our Strength as a living Church

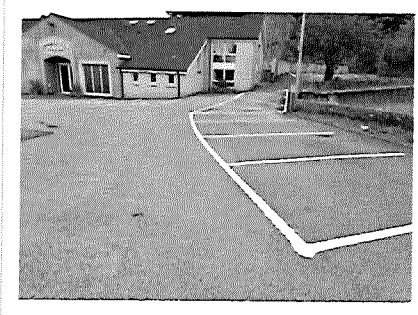
While living stones individually shape how our Parish Church looks, only together in Jesus can we be strong. Each person in our cartoon church supports the other using their own strength to keep everyone in place. Our Church only works best when we too all interlock together in a unique way sharing in responsibilities and to be strong so that we might serve Jesus.

One example of such shared strength is in our FWO giving. The FWO grew last year through the increased generosity of about 1/3 of our parish households. That extra £10 (at least) each month goes a long way to cover the ever-increasing costs of mission, overheads, staffing and the continual maintenance of the graveyard and church buildings.



This increase helped pay towards the overall cost of the Vicarage refurbishment. It offsets the loss of dividend incurred from the use of our unrestricted investments and this has allowed us to pay for the work in full with no outstanding costs.

The Vicarage has now been completed and we want to thank ME Crowe and their team for all the hard work in achieving such a great finish. This is a Parish asset for years to come. I plan to put together a video telling whole story of the work from beginning to end. Thank you to everyone involved.



We also used our finance to re-mark the Church car park and fix the lighting to make everything safer.

We have also addressed the deterioration of some Church windows, refurbished the Church Noticeboard, and upgraded the fuse box in the main Parish Church building and replaced the radio mics to eradicate the continuous interference. This year, we plan to replace the Church front door through a very generous donation and may have to replace the ride on lawn mower used in the graveyard.

However, we must maintain our financial strength in what more we can give. If you have not been able to increase, please consider doing so. An extra £10 a month goes a long way. We also want to help people move from envelopes to Standing Orders. With the closure of the Saintfield Dankse Branch in June 2024, we will now have to travel to make deposits. Standing Orders help overcome that need. Sally in the office will be happy to advise how to set this up. We need to balance our books as a charity to fulfil our Jesus Mission and Ministry.

Our strength also comes from how we support each other through the activities of Church life.

A big thank you to all our volunteers who give up so much in many organisations. There are too many to name, but a big thank you to the Mothers' Union Committee for all their hard work and especially to Marion Edwards as Chair, 6 years in looking after the Mothers' Union. A real blessing of support and organisational skills.

I also want to say thank you to all involved with Wednesday Welcome Team of Julie, Andree, Ann, Mervyn who connect with so many in the community. For those who help lead in REFRESH and our Youth Work on Sunday / Friday night, thank you. Without Craig, Sarah, Dan, Harry, Toby, Wenda + David, we could do nothing. A big thanks to Jean looking after Knit and natter on Monday. A great wee community group who enjoy everything they do. Well done.

Thank you also to our Select Vestry / Trustees who also offer so much as volunteers: Stephen Erskine as (Hon Secretary) who keeps brilliant Minutes and writes the clear letters; Caroline Kearney (Hon Treasurer) who crunches the numbers and keeps us right with the Charity Commission; Joy Whitley & Craig Weston as Glebe-Wardens who were very much part of the Vicarage project; Peter & Carol Andrews who looked after us so well as Church Wardens over the past year.

The Vestry also has people involved with the Graveyard, (Linda) and with Safeguarding (Kate & Rosemary) all of which are very important and essential roles. We have recently updated our Safeguarding Policy, Graveyard Regulations as well Parish Hall regulations.

There are people who also support the larger church using their specific people skills. Dawn Gordon works with the Vicar as a Parish Visitor offering significant time and support in being there with folk. I know there are others in the Parish who also visit and care and I am very grateful for all they offer. Thankyou.



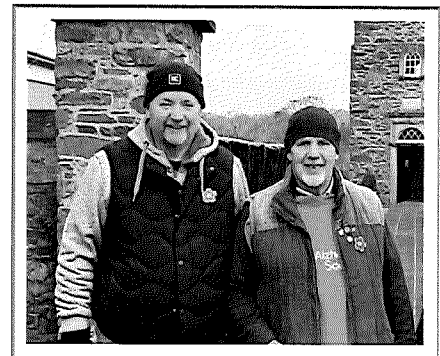
Donna Matchett spiritually leads the 8.30am Holy Communion and Denis (Her dad) is our Church Warden, always on time and organised. Our thanks also Canon Ian McDonald for his deeply appreciated godly assistance in Worship and to Alan Higgins who faithfully every month, to lead and preach and encourage us at our 10.00am Morning Worship. And of course, to Jackie, the hidden PowerPoint man who makes all the slides click even when Chris interferes ☺

Michael Harris as our organist is such a blessing keeping us right with the music, adapting and helping us to grow in our worship. His provision of music for Sunday Worship, Weddings and funerals is deeply valued.



The parish also offers a support structure that employ staff to make us operate efficiently as a charity. Sally Milligan in our Office gives so much assistance to the Vicar and Parish in how she administers all the normal day to day routines. She is a self-starter and a warm welcome to the many who come into Church House. Jean Perrin is invaluable as Assistant Treasurer and with Caroline and Sally, keeps everything paid on time and clearly recorded.

Ian Gordon as Sexton keeps everything in the Parish Hall, Carpark, Church and Graveyard up to a fantastic standard. Through his upkeep of our hall, we have grown the number of community groups over the past year who use it. Ian has everything set up for them and the Church itself is always ready for worship every Sunday. Thank you.



William Drury looks after the Graveyard as Convenor, not just co-ordinating Funeral Services with Norman McBriar and others, but answering any queries the public might have. This is a complex need and William ensures that the Graveyard offers the highest level of care and attention to all. Thank you.

Finally, we are strong together through everything we all give in our own way. Coffee & Tea after Church, those who read the Bible in Church or lead in Church Prayers, Ronnie White and his leadership team arranging Men Alive to clear up the weeds that never stop growing in the Church grounds, Leonard Hill beginning to put together a new magazine and with Muriel, delivering the weekly Newsletters. Badminton and Bowling organised by William and Ian connect us with people in Saintfield in a great way. Then there are those who support the Christmas SITOUT to raise money for charity, the Christmas Street Fair volunteers as well those looking after Pitter Patter (thank you Sarah, David, Valda, Joanne & Dawn). These are hidden jobs that help glue together our Church and Mission, so SPC grows stronger for Jesus and lives for him.

We still however need more volunteers to maintain what we do. More people for youth work, Tea and Coffee, leadership in some organisations that need the injection of your strength that only your individual stone can bring. It doesn't matter what shape or size your life and faith is, our Church can fit what is offered into the shape our Parish Church can become. **Please however, do not wait to be asked to do something.** You might see something that has been forgotten about or only you can do. So step up, volunteer, serve God and Saintfield Parish Church in the way only you can.

### **Our Shining outwards as a living church.**

This might not be obvious from looking at the Church Cartoon. But look!!!  
People are shining Jesus outwards through their smile and sense of joy of being together.  
They shine Jesus outwards to those not in their Church!!

Our Church also must always shine Jesus outwards. If we stop looking out at the world and Church becomes the place where we only look at ourselves, then our shape and strength becomes irrelevant and we will shrink and die.

Last October, we took the opportunity to shine Jesus outwards through our Church Mission 'FOUND'.

We wanted people to experience Jesus shining into their hearts.

We wanted people to encounter something bigger for life and death.

We wanted people to discover that the darkness of their sin no longer needs control them. Our speakers offered so much and it was a real Jesus' glue for Saintfield Parish Church in its energy and power.



We plan some more 'shining' in 2024-25. Through our growing partnership with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Saintfield Presbyterian Churches, I have been meeting with both Sam Bostock and John Torrens to explore greater collaboration in Mission and of how we all together can tell Saintfield of Jesus Christ. We can now confirm that Rico Tice from All Souls Langham Place, London will be with us for a Mission Weekend in February 2025.

All three churches in the next months will be meeting together for prayer and preparation for this event so that together we can shine Jesus where each church exists in Saintfield. We hope and pray that together, we will ensure the Gospel message will shine brightly in Saintfield as God calls more people to be added not just to our Churches, but his Kingdom.

We also will be arriving in 2026 at our 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. This is another opportunity to 'shine' as the living stones. We need to pray and fully consider what that these special years might look like. We will need to begin to plan and prepare, for time will go very fast if we are not careful.

When the time  
**IS RIGHT**  
I, THE LORD  
will make  
*it happen*  
Isaiah 60:22

Which leads me to the final truth of what it means to be 'We are Church' for as living stones who have the best shape, offer the truest strength, shine outwardly for Jesus,

We can only do so because

**We are sure!!**

Together as living stones, we are sure our God is in control. We sleep in peace for ultimately, we know when we wake up, God is in control for Jesus is OUR Living Stone.

We as Saintfield Parish are sure of our Jesus' shape, strength and shining of God's love. We are safe and secure not because of everything we can do to make it work, but what Jesus has done for us and what the Holy Spirit will make happen through the promise of God's Word.

We give thanks for the blessing of being living stones built together and God's blessing that shapes, strengthens and shines upon our Christ approved lives. Let's continue to build Saintfield Parish Church not in our name but in the name of our Lord Jesus. Being and becoming more and more the authentic Church of Jesus with open doors, open hands and open hearts for all. Everyone who God calls ever closer to him, to being known by Him and loved by Him and saved by Him that they too may be the living stones not just of Saintfield Parish but of God's Kingdom here on Earth and for then in Heaven with Him. Amen

## **Saintfield Parish Church Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023 (continued)**

### **Financial Review**

On the Statement of Receipts and Payments for year ended 31 December 2023, Parish receipts total approximately £337k. This figure includes the sale of Parish unrestricted investment capital of approximately £140k, used to help fund the Vicarage renovation project. We also received an extremely kind donation of £50k towards these costs. The capital was withdrawn from the investments, then transferred to the Parish bank accounts before being paid to the contractors.

We have seen a rise in the number of Parishioners giving their Freewill Offering (FWO) by standing order. Thank you, this helps us to budget and forecast future cash flow. Graveyard income has increased slightly, and we received a kind donation of £1k towards it, to be invested in M&G Investments.

Parish Hall income (rental of premises) has again risen in 2023 as new groups have continued to use the Parish Hall and users increase the number of hours they rent the complex. Long may this continue.

2023 saw the conclusion of the project to refurbish our wonderful Vicarage to bring it up to Diocesan standard and future proof for years to come. The spend was agreed by the Select Vestry Trustees in 2022 and am sure you will agree, was money well spent. However, this upgrade did come at a cost. In addition to £100k that was withdrawn from Parish investments in 2022, a further £55k from RB General Unit Trust (NI) and £85k from M&G Investments was required. This has had a negative impact on the income provided by the investments. In 2023 we received approximately £6,500 less than 2022 as expected. This will continue to be monitored and addressed this financial year. Restricted investments were valued at £65k (approx.) and unrestricted at £291k (approx.). Other fluctuations were due to market performance and conditions.

Running costs for the Parish continue to rise each year. Salary costs are up and most notable are the increases in fuel such as oil and electricity. Essential groundworks at the Hall were carried out in 2023 to fix the outside lighting issue to keep all users safe. As costs remain high, we once again encourage Parishioners to give extra in their monthly FWO.

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.

### **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 2023 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.

## **Saintfield Parish Church**

### **Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023 (continued)**

#### ***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 2023 the Select Vestry met on 8 occasions. The average attendance was 74%.

#### ***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.

#### **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.

**Saintfield Parish Church  
Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023 (continued)**

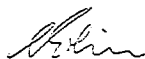
Signed on Behalf of the Trustees

Rev. Chris Pollock



Date: 28 March 2024

Mr Stephen Erskine



28 March 2024

Mrs Caroline Kearney



28 March 2024