

## **Bethany Church Finaghy**

### **Trustees' Annual Report**

#### **Year ended 30 September 2023**

The Trustees of Bethany Church Finaghy present their Report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 30 September 2023.

#### **1. Achievements and performance**

Bethany Church has services and activities that continue to take place on a weekly basis or at various times over the course of the year. Members of the public and members of the Church find these occasions beneficial and an opportunity to worship God and also increase their knowledge of the Bible and its teachings.

This reporting year saw a return to more normal activities following the end of the pandemic and its associated public restrictions. Some activities, such as the weekly prayer group, have continued to use video conferencing as a convenient means of meeting. Live streaming on-line of the main Sunday Services, first introduced during the pandemic, continues to be openly available to the public each week. In addition, an audio recording of the Sunday Bible teaching is freely, publicly available by podcast. In every other respect, meeting face to face is again the norm.

**Sunday at Bethany.** Throughout the year, each Sunday we had a main morning service that incorporated worship, a Breaking of Bread communion service, and consecutive Bible teaching. Children and youth leave part-way through this service for a parallel Kingdom Youth, Kingdom Kids and Kingdom Tots programme. On alternative Sunday evenings, a number of Small Groups (including a youth group) meet within the church building for Bible study and discussion.

**Prayer.** Prayer is a key element of the life of Christians at Bethany Church. All are encouraged as individuals to pray on a daily basis using the Bethany Prayer Calendar as a guide. Ministry groups and leaders meet and pray, and the weekly Thursday Prayer Group continued to meet on-line. On occasions a visiting speaker will inform of ongoing missionary work.

**Children and Youth.** Bethany Church, since its beginnings, has had a thriving children's and youth work. In October 2022 the Church were pleased to host again the interactive Life Exhibition, with some 700 local primary children visiting. In November, to support and advance this work, a new Children and Families' Worker was employed 4 days per week. This Worker is engaged alongside the full time Support Worker in also assisting the administration of the Church, in the support of existing ministries and the development of new ministries, and also supporting the over 70 volunteers in their service. All the children and youth programmes are now largely based on a Friday evening and includes Every Girls and Boys Rallies, Young Explorers, and Ignite.

Bethany Church has an active Policy on the Protection of Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults. Staff and volunteers are AccessNI cleared and are trained in the operation of the Protection Policy and appropriate safeguarding practices. Safeguarding Co-ordinators assist the Church, its staff and volunteers, for the benefit of the children and young people.

The annual Bethany (residential) Camp for children and young people was re-established in July 2023 after a gap of some years due to the pandemic.

The Bethany support workers continue to be involved in schools' ministry in the Finaghy and Lisburn areas.

Bethany Church was also pleased to again join together with three other local churches and with Scripture Union NI, to provide the Crossroads community programme in August 2022, catering for children in the 4 to 17 age groups.

At Easter 2022, an annual Sports Academy for children and Community work programme was again organised by Bethany staff workers and volunteers.

**Parent & Toddlers in the community.** On Thursday mornings during term time the Church hold a popular Parent & Toddlers Group in the Bethany Centre. After a period of absence, due to Covid restrictions, this recommenced in November 2022; an on-line booking system is used to provide a safer environment in terms of numbers attending.

**Women & Men.** Some new groups were established in-year. These included 'Women Who Rise' to encourage and support all women, and 'Locker Room' to encourage and support men over 18 years old. The work among Young Adults, previously known as Chill, continued.

**Community Partnering.** Bethany Church members are pleased to continue to support the work of Storehouse Belfast through the voluntary donation of clothes, furniture, and household goods alongside food parcels. Additionally, some Bethany members volunteer their time on a regular basis with Storehouse.

**Pastoral Care.** Bethany Church has a pastoral care support group and a co-ordination team that seeks to support members who are not able to attend church services regularly, and also provides pastoral support to members and their families in times of illness, bereavement and through difficult life experiences.

**UK, Ireland, and Overseas Mission.** Outside the regular church service and community outreach and youth programmes, we took a continued close interest in a wide range of Christian outreach in the UK, Ireland, and overseas, in mission work, and helping the poor and disadvantaged, and in international humanitarian relief. As the opportunity arises, we invite those engaged in such work to provide reports and information sessions to the members. We have provided limited financial support to encourage and enable young people and students to engage in summer teams at home and overseas with Christian organisations.

## 2. Financial Review

**Review.** The Trustees are content with the financial results for the year 2022-2023. Total receipts on unrestricted funds were £122,293. Details are set out in the Receipts and Payments Accounts. Restricted fund donations of £11,500 were received. Together with HMRC Gift Aid, Bank Interest and grants this amounts to total funds received of £168,909. Giving through general donations remains largely unchanged from 2021-2022. The Church is reporting a small surplus of £2,572 in this year, compared to a deficit of £10,421 in 2021-2022.

The Trustees are thankful to the members for their continued generous giving to Bethany Church, and we give praise to God for this. This has enabled the running of Bethany Church and its many and various ministries, as well as supporting Christian work and its workers throughout the world through a number of UK agencies. Full details of the finances of the Church and its donations are presented to the members annually, as well as a summary in a monthly newsletter.

**Financial governance.** The Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer are supported by a Finance Committee. The Treasurer is an experienced senior professional business executive; the Deputy is a Chartered Accountant. The elders and deacons receive copy minutes of the monthly Finance Committee for review and information. The membership of Senior Leaders Group (SLG) includes the Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer who provide a monthly overview of finance to each meeting of SLG.

**Reserves Policy.** The Finance Committee, in agreement with the Trustees and SLG, has agreed a reserves policy to deal with any emergency situations that may arise. It is that policy to maintain reserves equivalent to one year's salary liabilities, and a further amount to cover unforeseen property related expenses. Bethany Church therefore seeks to maintain a reserve of £70,000 to be held in an interest-bearing account.

**Serious incident reporting.** No serious incidents or other matters occurred that needed to be brought to the Charity Commissioners attention.

**Exemptions from disclosure.** No exemptions from disclosure were applied for. The Trustees have disclosed all those events of which they are aware which involve possible non-compliance with laws and regulations, together with the actual or contingent consequences which may arise as a result. We believe that there are no other facts which would materially affect the Financial Statements for the year ended 30 September 2023.

### 3. Reference and administrative details

Registered charity name	Bethany Church Finaghy	
Charity registration number	NIC 101059	
Date of Registration	13 April 2022	
HMRC Reference	XN47623	
Main Church address	135c Upper Lisburn Road` Belfast BT10 0LH	
The Trustees	Alan Brontë (elder & honorary secretary) Paul Hunter Mitchell McCoy (deceased 2 January 2023) George Parks (deceased 19 September 2023) Stephen Rogers	
The Elders	Geoff Kennedy David MacCorkell	Ian MacCorkell Alan Brontë.

The Deacons	Richard Alexander Alastair Glasgow Stephen Glasgow James Hume (Deputy Treasurer) Jonathan McCoy John McFadden Mario Paolucci Mark Rankin Neal Spence (Support Worker) William Stewart (Treasurer) Alan Vennard
Independent Examiner	W R Crymble Chartered Management Accountants 3 Governors Gate Lane, Hillsborough. BT26 6FX
Banking	Ulster Bank Limited Unit G, Westwood Centre, Kennedy Way, Belfast. BT11 9BQ
Solicitors	Hewitt & Gilpin Ltd Solicitors 73 Holywood Road, Belfast. BT4 3BA

#### **4. Structure, governance and management.**

Bethany Church Finaghy is an independent local church, governed by a Deed of Trust dated 21 June 1947. The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, at the request of the Trustees, and after due inquiry and pursuant to Section 31 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, put in place a scheme to replace Clause 7 of the existing governing document in respect of the dissolution provisions. This scheme was completed on 20 November 2020. The most recent Memorandums to the Trust Deed in respect of the choice and appointment of new trustees, were completed on 7 February 2022 and then registered in the Registry of Deeds.

The Trustees have legal responsibility for the affairs of Bethany Church. However, the day-to-day spiritual leadership and care is undertaken by the elders who meet at least monthly. Given the wide responsibilities of the eldership, the elders have in place a number of committees, each dealing with particular aspects of church life. The day-to-day management of practical matters of the Church is largely undertaken by the deacons through their involvement with other leaders in a number of committees. These include the Finance Group, the Property Group, the Teaching Team, Pastoral Care Team, and Number 1 (Children & Youth) Leaders. A Senior Leadership Group (SLG) which comprises all elders and deacons, meets monthly for the overall co-ordination of all matters of the Church.

During the period of this Report, the Church employed two people: a full time Support Worker, and, with effect from 7 November 2022 a Children & Families' Worker 4 days per week.

A full financial and activity report is presented to the Bethany Church members annually, normally in November. Throughout the year, there is a strong emphasis on communication with the membership, primarily through weekly emails.

## **5. Objectives and activities**

The overall objectives of Bethany Church are set out in the Deed of Trust of 1947. These include the use of the buildings for the worship of God, for the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God and for the fellowship and edification of believers. As a Bible-based Christian fellowship 'our mission' is to see people changed into devoted and mature followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. 'Our vision' is to be a growing and maturing New Testament Community of believers, devoted to Jesus Christ as Lord, and to one another, committed to knowing, living and proclaiming His Word in the power of the Holy Spirit, involved in serving the Body of Christ and reaching lost people with all the resources that God has given us.

Bethany Church organises a range of activities, and the trustees have considered the Commission's specific guidance on public benefit and in particular that of 'advancement of religion.'

Public access is provided to: Bible teaching and Bible study programmes; worship services, incorporating observance of Christian ordinances; and personal development and pastoral support programmes. The provision seeks to meet the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of individuals and build a sound Christian moral framework and social capital within the communities it serves. A broad spectrum of tailored programmes ensures that the public benefit is both inclusive and unique to specific groups. These include: personal and social development activities for children and youth; mutual care and support network for families or individuals; community action; and pastoral care and support for vulnerable groups. The benefits are demonstrated through informal responses from church attendees and members of the general public participating in the various outreach and youth programmes, and through formal annual reviewing and reporting. The beneficiaries are members of the public, mainly from the Greater Belfast and Lisburn areas, who attend voluntarily regular church services, community outreach programmes, or children and youth activities.

The Trustees' Annual Report for 2022-2023 was approved on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and signed on behalf of the Trustees by:



Alan Brontë  
Trustee, Elder & Honorary Secretary