

Apsley Hall Assembly
Annual Report and Accounts
for year ended
31 December 2023

Registered Charity NIC101167

Reference and administrative information

Charity Name and Number Apsley Hall Assembly
Registered Charity NIC101167
HMRC Charity Reference Number: XN46018

Correspondence Address James Thompson
66 Magheralave Meadows
Lisburn
BT28 3NT

Web Presence w: <http://apsleyhall.net/>
e: info@apsleyhall.net
f: <http://en-gb.facebook.com/ApsleyStreetHall>
t: <http://twitter.com/apsleyhall>

Trustees J M Fitzhugh
S Rogers
All trustees are resident in Northern Ireland.

Elders J M Fitzhugh
T Reid
S Rogers

Deacons I Udaiyar

Staff The assembly employs no staff. Caretaking, catering duties, youth work, relief work and Christian ministry were undertaken by a team of 30 volunteer church members and regular attenders. We have paid a cleaner every other week since September 2022.

Bankers Danske Bank
Forestsides, Belfast, BT8 6FX
& Barclays Bank UK PLC
17 Castle Place, Belfast, BT1 1EL

Independent Examiner Samantha Martin, FCA
Martin Bookkeeping and Accountancy Services
5 Magheralave Manor
Lisburn
BT28 3EN

Solicitors Hewitt & Gilpin
14-16 James Street South
Belfast
BT2 7GA

Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 December 2023

The Trustees present their report along with the financial statements of the Church for the year ended 31 December 2023. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in Note A, and comply with the trust deed and applicable law.

Objectives and activities

The objectives of the Assembly, as stated in the Trust Deed are:

- (1) to glorify God and advance the Christian faith by bearing witness in word and action to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and to the truths of Christianity (in accordance with the Statement of Beliefs);
- (2) to relieve sickness and financial hardship and to promote and preserve good health by the provision of funds, goods or services of any kind, including through the provision of counselling and support;
- (3) to advance education;
- (4) to establish new local churches;
- (5) to advance citizenship by inculcating Christian ethical behaviour in and among people of all ages; and
- (6) to promote reconciliation.

These objects may be pursued in the United Kingdom or Ireland or the world in such ways as the Trustees from time to time may think fit.

In furtherance of the principal object of the Charity the Trustees maintain Apsley Hall as a place for the worship of God, the preaching of the gospel of God and the fellowship and edification of the Christian believers who constitute the Assembly. This is mainly done by weekly meetings for the Lord's Supper (communion service), the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, prayer and fellowship, and the weekly Apsley Bible Club for young people.

Since the preaching of the gospel is not restricted to any one location or community, it has been the practice of the Assembly, following the example of the New Testament, to encourage interest in missionary work at home and abroad, and to use Assembly funds, over and above what is needed to maintain the fabric of the building and fund local meetings, to support missionary work worldwide. During 2023 such support was given to 15 evangelists and missionaries/missionary couples and 16 mission, relief and support organizations.

Achievements and performance

The objects of the Assembly are spiritual and qualitative, and therefore are difficult to measure in many respects. A high proportion of members continue to be engaged in serving the Lord in a variety of ways in the Assembly.

(1) Glorifying God and advancing the Christian faith

The Assembly provides a variety of church services and activities throughout the year. Membership at the end of 2023 was 35, as we welcomed 3 new members but also said goodbye to 3 members.

In person worship services and activities were able to be carried on as in the previous year. Services continue to be available online for those of our older members who are still unable to attend services in person.

The Trustees are delighted with the way the assembly continues to support many missionaries and mission organisations at home and abroad through prayer, financial giving and volunteering. During the year 15 evangelists and missionaries/missionary couples were supported in the work of evangelism and Bible teaching in Ireland (north and south), and also in England, Albania, China, Cyprus, France, Moldova, and Zambia.

The Assembly enjoyed reports from several missionaries representing Christian mission work that the Assembly supported in 2023 in Moldova, Zambia, Eastern Europe and worldwide Christian publishing.

Some members of the assembly were able to make trips to aid in medical relief work during the year. One member continues to work as a volunteer with Bible Centred Ministries International, and another as a volunteer editor for Bible Educational Services. Several members regularly preach in other Christian churches throughout Ireland. Four current and former members are involved full- or part-time with the Myrtlefield Trust, a worldwide Christian publishing ministry.

As in previous years, the assembly continued to offer Bibles free of charge to website visitors. A total of 144 Bibles were posted during 2023 to addresses in the UK and Ireland.

The Trustees receive benefit from this object in the same way as the public at large. This is regarded as incidental.

(2) Relieving sickness and financial hardship and promoting and preserving good health

The church has an annual offering for Chitokoloki Mission Hospital in Zambia, where several of our members have served in various capacities in recent years, including 2023.

Regular support is given to a children's home in Albania that several members of the church have visited in the past.

Funds were sent to help victims of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria through Open Doors, to whom we also sent our regular annual offering for the suffering church throughout the world. Our annual offering for Mission Aviation Fellowship also helped support a variety of relief efforts worldwide. And through Manara International support was also given to refugees from Syria and Iran, now located in Jordan.

During 2023 we continued to provide food to several families known to members as part of a relief scheme, helping with the cost-of-living crisis.

(3) Advancing education

During the year there have been offerings to support Christian mission schools in Burundi, Cyprus and Zambia where three of our past members have previously taught. We also supported Manara International's work in running camps for young people in Jordan. We had an annual offering for Bible Educational Services, which provides materials to schools and individual young people in Ireland and in a large number of languages and countries across the world. In addition, a local homework club has used our premises during school terms as public health regulations permitted.

The assembly has continued a series of informal Sunday evangelistic evenings, discussing stories recorded in the Gospels. There has been an encouraging number of interested visitors coming to these events.

(4) Establishing new local churches

Many of the missionaries supported during the year are engaging in building up churches established recently. One evangelist was supported who is actively seeking to establish a new church in Northern Ireland.

(5) Advancing citizenship

The Christian gospel clearly teaches respect for, and submission to, lawfully appointed human authority, and active participation in the societies where church members live. Such teaching contributes to the advancing of citizenship, and is an integral part of all teaching given to adults and children who participate in the church's activities.

(6) Promoting reconciliation

This past year we continued to support and staff a cross-community residential on behalf of BCM.

The Trustees have had regard to the statutory guidance in respect of the Public Benefit Requirement published by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

Financial review

Results

The Trustees are once again thankful for the Lord's blessing throughout another year and are grateful for the continued generosity of members of the Assembly, and regular attenders at the meetings, particularly in the face of the difficult financial and personal circumstances arising from the COVID pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

Gifts and gift making policy

It is the assembly policy to make gifts to Christian workers commended by the Assembly to the Lord's work, former members of the Assembly and others known to the elders and members of the Assembly who are engaged in Christian ministry in Ireland and worldwide. During the year 15 evangelists and missionaries/missionary couples received gifts totalling £17,650 and 10 mission organizations and Christian schools overseas received £6,800. Further gifts totalling £14,776 were made to give practical relief in Albania, Jordan, Kenya, Turkey/Syria, Zambia, the UK, and to the suffering Christian church worldwide.

Reserves policy

The Trustees aim to have sufficient funds from year to year to maintain the meeting hall and to make a significant ongoing contribution to Christian mission work in Ireland and worldwide. The Trustees have set aside an amount equal to approximately one year's essential costs to maintain the hall and regular church meetings, and three months of regular missions giving. Reserve funds are invested in a spread of low to moderate risk funds that are ethically invested. The Trustees are currently seeking to increase reserves in the building fund with a view to a possible future building project.

Risk management

The Trustees have examined the major business and operational risks which Apsley Hall Assembly faces. They have appointed a qualified accountant as honorary treasurer. All offerings are counted by two people who sign a record of the amounts received, and all cheques issued are signed by two people from a panel of four authorized signatories. The Trustees monitor the finances regularly throughout the year, and are confident that the risks are relatively minimal given the nature of its work, the donations made to it and the modest costs that it incurs.

Taxation status

As a charity recognized by HM Revenue and Customs the Assembly has no liability to taxation on its charitable activities.

Structure, governance and management

Apsley Hall Assembly is an independent local church and a charity recognized by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), originally constituted under a trust deed dated 10 March 1921 which was replaced by a modern deed dated 30 September 2014, with a minor modification in July 2015. It is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland as of 28 January 2015 as required by the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 (as amended).

Trustees are appointed by the Board of Trustees and serve for an indefinite period. Those Trustees who have served during the year are set out on page 2.

The Trustees meet annually, but have delegated the spiritual oversight of the assembly to elders who are appointed by the elders from within the church membership. The elders are assisted in the ongoing management of the assembly funds and fabric by deacons. Elders and deacons are selected on the basis of the biblical qualifications given in 1 Timothy and Titus, and serve for an indefinite period. The elders meet once a month, and at least one elder meets with the deacon(s) once a month also.

No trustee is remunerated for their services as trustee, but they are reimbursed for authorised payments they have made for assembly expenses.

Risk

The Trustees consider that there are two main areas of risk facing the Assembly, as follows:

Financial: The Assembly relies almost entirely on the income received from freewill offerings which enables the Assembly to achieve its charitable objectives. This past year there was an excess of receipts over payments of £19,640, excluding the transfer of the Epworth fund balances to the Cash Plus account (compared to an excess of payments over receipts of £4,786 in 2022). Voluntary donations during the year increased by 6.0%, with weekly boxes down by £6,525, but other gifts up by £13,904, largely due to some large one-off gifts towards the Building Fund (see also disclosure in C2 below). Gift Aid decreased by £3,405. The cost of maintaining the building and holding services increased by £339 during 2023. Costs of repairs to the fabric of the building were £2,443 less than in 2022. The Trustees consider that any additional costs should not pose a significant risk in 2024. Should income be reduced significantly, the Trustees would implement a cost reduction programme and seek additional sources of income to ensure the Assembly's financial stability.

Reputational: A child protection policy has been drawn up in relation to work with children and the elders have appointed a designated child protection officer. This policy is reviewed annually, and everyone who assists with the children's work is vetted. A safeguarding policy has been drafted and is currently going through approval checks.

Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

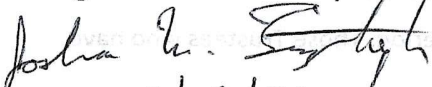
The law applicable to charities in Northern Ireland requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the Charity's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing those financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

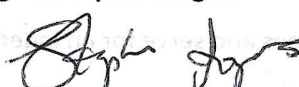
- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 (as amended). They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Approved by the Trustees and Elders on 22/09/24

and signed on their behalf by Joshua Fitzhugh & Stephen Rogers


22/09/24


22/09/24