

# **St Thomas's Parish Church, Belfast**

**Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 December 2023**

**Charity no. 101975**



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## Charity Information

<b>Trustees</b>	The Rev. P Jack Prof A Aughey Ms. S Aughey Mr. K Chan Mr. P Dundas Mr. C Eneh Miss M Howe Mr. D G King Mr. P King Mrs. A Oxley Mr. O Paulin
<b>Registered charity number</b>	101975
<b>Registered address</b>	St Thomas's Parish Church c/o The Rectory 1A Eglantine Avenue Belfast BT9 6DW
<b>Bankers</b>	Danske Bank Donegall Square West Belfast BT1 6JS
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stthomas.connor.anglican.org">www.stthomas.connor.anglican.org</a>
<b>Facebook</b>	facebook.com/stthomasbelfast
<b>Twitter</b>	@stthomasbt9

## Trustees' Report

The trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023.

### Charitable purposes

The principal purpose of St Thomas's Parish Church, Belfast is to support the advancement of the Christian religion by promoting through the work of the Parish 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 is fundamental to the practical delivery of the tenets of Christianity. As a result of activity in pursuit of the advancement of the Christian religion, the Parish has custody of a large body of records, materials and artefacts of significance to the cultural heritage, the maintenance of which is undertaken by the Parish as a secondary charitable purpose.

### Background

St Thomas's Parish Church is located in South Belfast, Northern Ireland and is part of the Church of Ireland, which is a member Church of the world-wide Anglican Communion.

We are committed to be a beacon for God in the City – through our witness, openness and friendliness to all.

- We welcome and include everyone, in our worship, prayer and activities.
- We seek to reflect God's love for all people and all creation.
- We seek to serve God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in prayer, worship and lifestyle.

We are committed to excellence for God; we welcome all who wish to join us in our work and fellowship.

Whether you are from Belfast or visiting the city, you will be very welcome in our Church.

### Details of activities, achievements, performance and public benefit

During the year we held in person services and meetings at our Church.

#### *Worship and prayer*

The main focus of activity is the public worship services which take place on Sunday morning. We have a range of services over the course of each month including a monthly family service, together with a number of special services throughout the year, which people who attend find both beneficial and spiritually fulfilling. On the 3rd Sunday evening of each month we have Evening Prayer with the Belfast Bach Cantata Consort.

Children and young people also take an active role in Family Services and other worship services including bible reading and leading the prayers.

Sunday Morning Prayer and Holy Communion services take place throughout the year.

We held a number of special services during the year including a number of funerals and burial of ashes.

## Trustees' Report (cont'd)

We also had the popular Christingle Service and the Service of Nine Lessons & Carols by candlelight during Advent.

Visitors who attend St Thomas' for worship all receive a very warm welcome.

We are one of the few Churches in Northern Ireland to have a peal of bells ringing each Sunday morning with regular practices and an active bell ringing society.

### *Pastoral care*

Some members of our Parish are unable to attend Church due to ill health or age. The Rector visits pastorally all Church members who have requested it, to pray with them and celebrate Holy Communion either at their homes or in hospital. The Rector also makes significant pastoral visits throughout the year, to both those who are members of the parish and those who are not. St Thomas's is also a welcoming and embracing Christian community which reflects the diversity of a modern and international Northern Ireland. Members of our Church regularly visit those who cannot attend to keep them in touch with Church life.

### *Mission, evangelism and charitable giving*

Helping those in need is a demonstration of our faith. During the year we were able to support the work of the following organisations:-

- Water Aid (£50);
- International Red Cross (£216); and
- Food donations were made to The Trussell Trust food bank in South Belfast during Harvest and throughout the year together with a Harvest donation of £50.

During Christian Aid week members of our Church collected £527 plus gift aid. All monies raised were passed on directly to Christian Aid.

### *Other activities*

We were pleased to be able to facilitate, on request, public access to the Church building and records.

## **Beneficiaries**

All of the Church-based activities listed above, which cover the youngest child to the oldest adult within the Church, are open to the population of South Belfast and beyond.

## Trustees' Report (cont'd)

### Financial review

Total receipts of unrestricted funds were £66,492 with restricted receipts of £467. This included church collections of £31,016, a legacy of £5,000 and receipts from property use of £19,870.

We are very grateful to the generosity of all who have contributed during the year.

Total payments of unrestricted funds were £72,823 with restricted payments of £17,504. Unrestricted payments included wages, salary and other employment costs of £47,662; diocesan payments of £12,379; electricity, water & gas of £4,008 and insurance of £1,669. Restricted payments included work and professional fees on the church rectory and rent of suitable alternative accommodation.

The overall result for the year was an excess of payments over receipts of £23,367. Additionally, there were liabilities of £10,175 at the end of the financial year. At the year end the cash on hand and bank balances of unrestricted funds was £10,628 and restricted funds of £229,566.

During the year the select vestry liaised with the Diocese regarding financial assistance to meet ongoing running costs.

The select vestry will continue to actively review and monitor the financial position of the Parish to attempt to seek to address deficits and to build unrestricted reserves in accordance with our Reserves Policy over the medium to long term.

### Structure, governance and management

#### *Governing Document and Constitution of the Charity*

Chapter III of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland (see [www.ireland.anglican.org/about/the-constitution](http://www.ireland.anglican.org/about/the-constitution)) 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.

## Trustees' Report (cont'd)

### *Organisational Structure*

The select vestry is responsible for the day to day management of the Parish. The select vestry consists of the Rector of the Parish, the churchwardens, the glebe wardens and up to twelve other members of the general vestry elected at the General Vestry.

The select vestry is chaired by the Rector. 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.

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 churchwardens. In 2023 the Select Vestry met 9 times during the year.

An inter-related system joining the central, diocesan and Parish provides additional assistance and sharing of expertise across the structures of the Church as well as achieving a consistent manner of dealing with issues.

All Church property is vested in the Representative Church Body.

### **Pay and remuneration**

The Rector of the Parish receives a stipend (£33,283) together with allowances (£5,493) in accordance with figures approved by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland.

No other trustee received pay or remuneration during the year.

### **Administrative information**

Details of the trustees who served during the year, registered address and charity registration number are given in the Charity Information section on page 1.

### **Compliance with Public Benefit**

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

## Trustees' Report (cont'd)

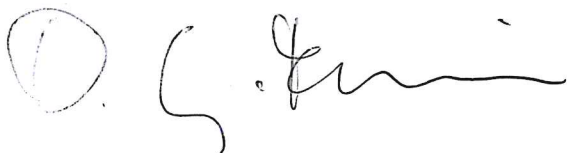
### Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

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.

**Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf:**

  
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