

Annual Report of the Select Vestry of the Church of St John Baptist, Parish of Helen's Bay, for the year ended 31 December 2023.

For the purposes of the presentation of the annual accounts or financial statements of the Parish under the present charitable legislation, the members of the Select Vestry are defined as the 'Trustees' of the charity, and are therefore required to report formally within the terms of the structure outlined below.

On 21st August 2024 the vacant position of Rector of St John's was filled by the Reverend Peter Hilton. For the first part of 2024, services, both regular and occasional (including burials, weddings and baptisms) had been undertaken by appropriate local clergy. The Area Dean had been instrumental in maintaining the smooth running of the Parish and had chaired all relevant meetings.

Objectives and Activities

The charitable purpose of the Church of Ireland is the advancement of religion. The principal function, therefore, of the Church of St John Baptist, Parish of Helen's Bay, is to support the advancement of the Christian religion by promoting, through its work, 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 Church of St John Baptist, Parish of Helen's Bay, has custody of property and of records, materials and artefacts of significance to the cultural and religious heritage of the area, the maintenance of which is undertaken by its Select Vestry.

Achievements, Performance and Public Benefit

Worship has been in tune with the rhythm of the Christian year, very ably led by an organist and the choir. There is an almost tangible sense of the beauty of holiness. Three services take place on every Sunday in the month, with the exception of the first Sunday on which there are two. Throughout the year, a mid week communion service is held on Wednesdays with, in addition, a less formal communion once a month. Close ties are routinely sustained with the local Presbyterian community. Joint services are normally held to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and to mark Holy Week and Easter Day. There were 4 baptisms, 11 funerals and no weddings. The parish magazine, *Views from the Bay*, widely distributed bi-monthly, provides a regular spiritual and community commentary on parish life.

The Parish undertakes a number of fund-raising events during the year, the proceeds of which, were all donated to a range of charities. Details may be found in the financial statements.

Church organisations are open to the community, as is the Church Hall, which is an important community asset: badminton, painting, tennis, drama, residents' meetings and private birthday parties take place. The Church itself is occasionally used for fund raising public concerts.

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 organisations.

Recruitment and appointment of the Select Vestry (Trustees)

All members of the Church of Ireland over 18, who are either resident or 'accustomed' members of the congregation for at least 3 months, may register as members of the General Vestry of the Parish, allowing them to attend and vote at its meetings and to stand for election to the Select Vestry. Meetings of the General Vestry are held at least once every year. Members of 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. The Rector appoints two parishioners every year to serve as his 'Wardens', one for the Church, whose remit will generally be to facilitate all services and who will chair vestry meetings in the Rector's absence, and one to assume responsibility for the maintenance and enhancement of the 'glebe', i.e. the church's estate including buildings (church, hall and rectory), gardens and land. The Rector's Wardens are supplemented by two wardens elected by the people. The four wardens serve as members of the Select Vestry ex officio.

Pay and remuneration

Both the Rector and Organist are paid directly by the Parish. The appointed Organist for St John's sadly passed away this year. Since her passing the role of Organist has been shared amongst local freelance musicians. It is hoped that a permanent replacement will be found in the near future. The remuneration for both the Rector and Organist is reviewed by the Select Vestry annually. The Rector's stipend is calculated with reference to and due consideration of, the minimum stipends recommended annually by the Diocese for the appropriate category of parish. The Organist's salary is calculated on the basis of comparable posts within the diocese, so far as they can be ascertained, with due regard to other duties which may be undertaken within or outwith the normal remit of the post. Details of the remuneration may be found in the financial statement.

Organisational structure

The Select Vestry is traditionally responsible for the furnishings, fabric and finance of the Church and its 'glebe', i.e. hall, rectory and grounds. It decides how parish funds are to be applied and other matters of general concern and importance. It consists of the Rector, the Churchwardens, Glebewardens and generally not more than 12 other members of the general vestry elected at the annual meeting of the General Vestry. The Select Vestry elects from within itself, or co-opts, a Secretary and Treasurer. It is chaired by the Rector or, in his absence, the Rector's Churchwarden. During interregnums, the chair is normally taken by the Area Dean.

The Select Vestry has scheduled monthly meetings throughout the year, with the exception of December and the summer months. During the summer months an executive committee is authorised to forward the necessary work of the Parish. Special meetings may also be called where it is deemed necessary

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 activities entered into during the year have helped to achieve the Parish's objectives and activities, as well as providing public benefit.

Statement of the Select Vestry's (Trustees') Responsibilities

The Select Vestry is responsible for preparing the 'Trustees' Report' and the statement of receipts and payments and the 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 E250,000 requires trustees to prepare a statement of receipts and payments and a statement of assets and liabilities for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the Church's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing those financial statements the members of the Select Vestry as trustees of the charity, are required to:

- a) select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- b) make judgements and estimates which are reasonable and prudent;
- c) state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- d) prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Church will continue in business.

The Select Vestry is responsible for maintaining proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Church and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. They have general responsibility for taking such steps as are reasonably open to them to safeguard the assets of the Church and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

Signed on behalf of the Select Vestry

Michael Hanna

Hon. Secretary

Date 24th March 2025