

St. Gall's Church, Parish of Carnalea, Co. Down

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2022

Charity Name: St. Gall's Church, Carnalea Parish

Address: 171, Crawfordsburn Road, Bangor, Co. Down BT19 1BT

NI Charity Number: NIC 102373

Trustees

Members of the Select Vestry of the Church are, by definition, Trustees of the charity, as listed below.

Canon Michael Parker (Rector of St. Gall's and Chairman of Trustees), William Tennis (Church Secretary), Derrick Conn (Joint Church Treasurer) to April 2022, Noel McKeown (Joint Church Treasurer), Gary Ballentine, Janis Dunn, Claire Farmer (from April 2022), Stephen Garland, Mervyn Henry (from April 2022), Mary Gilfillan-Griffin (to October 2022), Christine Gray, James Hanna, Christopher Houston, Nanette McCoy, James Noble, Pauline Smyth, Robert Thompson, Brian Waters.

Independent Examiner: John Grace, 37 Deanfield, Bangor, Co. Down BT19 6NX

Principal Bank: Bank of Ireland, 82a Main St., Bangor, Co. Down

Structure, Governance and Management

Chapter III of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland governs Parishes and Parochial Organisation. Members of the Select Vestry of the Parish are the Charity trustees.

All members of the Church of Ireland over the age of 18 who are resident within the Parish, or who 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 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 member of the clergy serving in the Parish is also a member of the Select Vestry and is Chairperson of the body. Other members of the Select Vestry consist of the Churchwardens, Glebewardens and generally not more than twelve other members elected at the General Vestry meeting.

The Select Vestry is responsible for the day to day management of the Parish, taking decisions on matters of general concern and importance to the Parish including how funds are to be applied. The Select Vestry meets at times fixed by the members or by the Diocesan Synod with additional meetings called as required by the Chairperson or the Churchwardens. In 2022, 12 meetings of the Select Vestry were held.

Remuneration

The incumbent minister receives a stipend and expenses of office in accordance with amounts approved by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland and by the Trustees. No other member of the Trustee body receives any remuneration for serving as a Trustee of St. Gall's Parish Church.

Statement of Charitable Purposes and Objectives

The charitable purpose of the Church of Ireland is the advancement of religion. The principal function of St. Gall's Church is to support the advancement of the Christian religion by promoting, through the work of St. Gall's, 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 St. Gall's 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 St. Gall's.

Activities, Achievements and Public Benefit

The general ethos of the Church and its usual interaction with parishioners' daily lives in normal times are reflected in the reports following this update on the ongoing impact of Covid on Church life in 2022

1. Covid, the Ongoing Impact in 2022

In 2022 it was recognised that Covid with variants would be with us, possibly on an ongoing basis, but that, thanks to the widespread provision of vaccines, we could live with it and gradually return to something like normal living, albeit prudently. This process began in Church and secular life in 2022 as restrictions on gatherings and other precautionary measures began to be relaxed.

Church services and worship gradually resumed in the form and frequency of more normal times and both the spiritual and social aspects of pre-pandemic Church life and activity returned steadily but carefully towards that described in the remainder of this Report. To this end 'Church Revival and Regeneration' in all its aspects is a continuing item on the agenda of the Church Vestry/Trustee body..

However, it is recognised that in 2022 Church attendances and activities have remained somewhat below previous levels and this has had some impact on finances as described later in this Report. Also, some of our major, longstanding social and fundraising events, notably our Annual Church Fete and Auction are unlikely to be revived. These were becoming very demanding upon resources (human) before Covid and their enforced absence for two years probably just accelerated their demise. The 'Street bt Street' prayer initiative referred to in Section 5 below has also not yet resumed post Covid restrictions. However, our Annual Art Exhibition returned very successfully in 2022 and we held a popular 'Family Fun Day' in June. Both of these are expected to be ongoing annual events with very positive social and financial outcomes.

2. Praise and Worship

A principal benefit of participation in Church life includes the public participation in worship, prayer and praise and in learning more about the Christian faith.

To this end St. Gall's holds **regular public services** on Sundays of Holy Communion at 8.30 am, Morning Worship at 10.00 and Evening Worship at 6.30 pm. Holy Communion is also celebrated at Sunday Morning worship at 10.00am on the first Sunday of each month and every Wednesday at 10.30am.

Special services are also held at important times of the year in the Christian calendar, such as Christmas and Holy Week at Easter, and also to mark baptisms, weddings and celebrations for the life of those who have sadly died. These services are provided to parishioners and to other members of the community who wish to mark these special cycle of life moments in a Christian environment.

Every Sunday morning at morning service, following the 'Children's Talk' there is a '**Sunday Club**' for young people up to P7 age held in the Church hall. This allows parents the freedom to attend and enjoy regular morning worship as well as ensuring that the children are taught about the basics of the Christian religion and encouraged to develop in the journey of faith.

Our Church also has a **Prayer Focus Group** who meet regularly in the Church or in their own homes to pray for individuals and topics which they feel are in need of prayer and God's help. The highlight of the year for this group is the organisation of an annual 24 hour prayer vigil held in the Lady Chapel at the Church. Many members of the congregation and others sign up for one or two hour slots to ensure that the whole day is prayerful. This Group also invites requests for prayer from parishioners and

members of the wider community. These anonymous requests are distributed to members of the congregation at Sunday morning service and they are requested to pray privately for the individuals named at morning service and during the week thereafter. This is a true community service for those in need of God's help.

For many years our regular worship has been greatly enhanced by our **Church choir** which, for a parish of our relatively modest size, has enjoyed strong membership. All in all, our choir has given a great richness and diversity to our worship. However, at present we have no permanent Organist and Choirmaster and rely upon a regular pianist and a retired organist to provide music for morning services.

3. Community Service

We have thriving **Scouting** movements meeting in St. Gall's involving all ages including Squirrels, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. These provide opportunities for young people in the community to learn, develop and grow in positive ways. The Group celebrated 50 years of Scouting at a special Church service in October 2019..

For adults there is a wide range of organisations and groups, open to all, meeting regularly to socialise and enjoy a wide range of lifestyle positive activities, hobbies and interests.

Other groups meet regularly to enjoy **art, craft, dance, exercise classes, and bowls**. In addition to these, our halls are let out to groups who also provide a social benefit through the provision of **children's nursery school** facilities, **Zumba** classes and other **activities**. Our successful **Bridge Club** also meets regularly and is enjoyed by both parishioners and visitors. Many of these groups donate significant funds to the Church.

Monthly '**Friendship**' **Lunches** are held for Church members and those in the wider local community. Many older, retired people (usually between 30 and 50 in number) enjoy a light meal. Again, apart from nourishment, this provides an opportunity for social interaction and fellowship which is greatly appreciated by those attending. There is also a monthly **Coffee Morning** which is also well supported.

Our two surviving **Annual Fund-raising** events are very well known in the local community and, indeed, further afield. These are our **Art Exhibition** and **Artisan Bazaar**. These events, attract many people from the local neighborhood and beyond.. Although their primary aim is to raise funds for the Church, these are true community events providing rare opportunities for fellowship and co-operative working for Church members as well as providing the wider general public of all ages with very memorable and joyous experiences. There is a very real element of Christian outreach in these events as the essential spirit of the St. Gall's community is revealed to all who attend.

4. Pastoral Care and Support for Those in Need

Visiting. Many of our parishioners are now elderly, in hospital, housebound or in care homes. Others have different personal difficulties. Apart from visits by the Rector to offer personal and spiritual comfort, many of our parishioners also visit such people regularly to provide support in practical ways through giving lifts, helping with shopping and, most importantly providing friendship, chat and social interaction.

Practical Gifts. St. Gall's supports the Storehouse **Food Bank** scheme in Bangor and regular donations of food items given by parishioners are delivered. Special donations of **Toys** for the Salvation Army Appeal are made at Christmas and of **fruit and flowers** to the elderly at harvest time.

Financial Support. St. Gall's supports Christian Aid and NI Hospice with funds raised through Coffee Mornings, the Sunday Club, the Dancers, a special Big Breakfast event and the annual Christian Aid week collections organised in conjunction with neighbouring churches.

St Gall's has a vibrant **South Sudan Support Group** which operates in support of the people of Maridi and Yei in conjunction with the Church Missionary Society Ireland (CMSI). A number of fund-raising events are held every year in support of specific projects. Three members of the Parish have visited Maridi in the past and Bishop Justin has visited and preached in St. Gall's over the years. His successor, Bishop Moses and his wife, Mama Rejoice lunched with parishioners at St. Gall's in September 2019 and in June 2022 St. Gall's hosted the, now Archbishop, Justin during a visit to Northern Ireland following the Lambeth Conference in Canterbury. St. Gall's funded his travel costs from London and a quickly arranged coffee morning raised over £1,000 for Chaima Theological College in Maridi. These personal contacts with South Sudan senior clergy helps to make our support for the Church there more personal and relevant.

5. Ecumenism and Evangelism

There are close ties at clergy level between the local churches, both Protestant and Catholic. In 2016 a **Prayer Initiative** called '**Street by Street**' involving the St. Gall's Prayer Focus Group and members of the local Presbyterian and Methodist churches began calling on residents, street by street, in the areas served by the churches. They explained they were calling in the name of God and offered to pray for anyone or anything that the householder felt needed prayer. They have discovered that there is indeed a need in the community for prayer and any requests are met by the teams praying daily for the requests made to them. This initiative has continued through 2019.

In **Holy Week at Easter** St. Gall's and the other local, Presbyterian and Methodist congregations come together for a week of services held in a different Church each evening. There is usually a guest speaker who delivers the sermons on an Easter theme which he/she develops as the week goes on.

6. The Public Benefit Requirement

The Trustees of St. Gall's have 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, as outlined above, have helped them to achieve the Parish's objectives as well as providing public benefits. In 2019 the St. Gall's Eco Congregation Group was established to evaluate and implement initiatives to reduce our carbon footprint and promote positive climate change.

7. Mitigation of Harm

The St. Gall's Trustees comply with the Church of Ireland's Safeguarding Trust Child Protection Policy.

The Trustees also take their responsibilities under Health and Safety Legislation very seriously and ensure that regular assessments are carried out and procedures and policies implemented to ensure that any threats to the health and safety of those using the Church's facilities are minimised. Appropriate licences, inspections and insurances are carried out or have been obtained. The Trustees also seek to ensure compliance with GDP Regulations.

Financial Review

As stated elsewhere in this Report, Church life began to return to something approaching normality in 2022 as the impact of Covid abated somewhat. This affected our finances in a positive way as well as general Church life and mission. Fundraising activities for Church and charities recovered, including lunches, coffee mornings as well as special events such as the Annual Art Exhibition and a new Family Fun Day. Income from the use of Church halls also recovered significantly. Free Will Offerings from parishioners remain down on pre Covid levels, largely as result of a decline in Envelope giving as Church attendances have not yet returned to pre Covid levels. However, our income this year was also boosted by the receipt of over £13,000 from a Government Covid grant scheme.

There were no exceptional expenditures in 2022, mainly standard operating costs, some of which such as heat and light increased substantially, and building loan repayments which still have some 4 years to run.

Overall, income exceeded expenditure by by some £13,000, broadly equivalent to the amount of grant received. As a result our cash Reserves increased year on year to over £96,000, a comfortable figure and in excess of our reserves policy. However, some £70,000 of this is due to Covid grants received over a three year period. This affords us the time to re-build all aspects of iour Church life, including our finances in the years ahead.

Thus we are confdent we can continue to meet our financial obligations, including servicing our outstanding New Development loan, into the future and can be regarded with confidence as a prudent, well-managed, ongoing financial concern.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees

M. A. Parker Date 8. 8. 2023

Canon Michael Parker, Chairman of Trustees

Noel McKeown Date 8/8/2023

Noel McKeown, Hon. Treasurer