

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

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2023

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), Noel McKeown (Church Treasurer), Gary Ballentine, Tanya Blamphin (from 23/04/2023), Janis Dunn, Claire Farmer, Stephen Garland, Mervyn Henry, Christine Gray, James Hanna, Christopher Houston, Nanette McCoy, James Noble, Pauline Smyth, Robert Thompson, Brian Waters (to 30/03/2023).

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 2023, 11 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 below.

1. 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 10.00am 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 whereby members of the Church commit to a time slot for prayer in their own home. 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.

2. Community Service

We have thriving **Scouting** and **Guiding** Troops meeting in St. Gall's involving all ages including Squirrels, Beavers, Cubs, Rainbows and Brownies, Guides and Scouts. These provide opportunities for young people in the community to learn, develop and grow in positive ways. The Scout Troop celebrated 50 years of Scouting in St. Gall's in 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, bowls and board games** In addition, 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 have recently been joined by our new **Family Fun Day** which has quickly become an exciting annual event. These all attract many people from the local neighbourhood 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.

3. 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 or phone 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 longstanding **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, most recently in 2022 following the Lambeth Conference. His successor, Bishop Moses and his wife, Mama Rejoice have continued with these visits whilst in the UK. These personal contacts with South Sudan senior clergy help to make our support for the Church there more personal and relevant.

4. Ecumenism and Evangelism

There are close ties at clergy level between the local churches.

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.

5. 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. Established in 2019, the St. Gall's Eco Congregation Group continues to evaluate and implement initiatives to reduce our carbon footprint and promote positive climate change.

6. 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

Overall, Income and Expenditure were broadly equal at around £162,000 thanks to a £10,000 bequest received during the year. Our cash Reserves therefore remained at over £96,500 at year end, comfortably in excess of our Policy value. This provides an important financial cushion as we repay our outstanding Building Development loan over the next three years or so, after which we should be financially more comfortable.

Free Will Offering donations from Church members remained steady, although down on pre-Covid levels and regular fundraising events and activities, which have always been a strong feature of our Church life, continued to recover steadily. Amongst these events, our new Family Fun Day in June returned for a second year and is now established as a regular event, succesful on all measures including financial.

High levels of inflation fuelled increases in expenditure across the board, especially in energy, insurance and interest charges. There were no exceptional expenditures incurred during the year. Nevertheless, despite this difficult economic environment, faced by all organisations during the year, we managed to break even over the period

Given our healthy Reserves we are confident we can continue to meet our financial obligations moving forward and be considered as a viable ongoing financial concern.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees

M. A. Parker Date 13.8.24.

Canon Michael Parker, Chairman of Trustees

Noel McKeown Date 13/8/24

Noel McKeown, Hon. Treasurer