

**Silverbirch Evangelical Church**  
**Annual Report**  
**Year ended 31 December 2022**



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## Administrative Details

### Registration

Registered (08/05/2015) with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland: NIC102433  
Registered with HM Revenue & Customs as a charity: XN48653

### Contact

Principal Address: 131 Silverbirch Road  
Bangor  
Co. Down  
BT19 6FA  
Website: [www.silverbirchchurch.com](http://www.silverbirchchurch.com)

### Trustees

Mr J S Boardman  
Mr A Hair  
Mr C F Lougheed  
Mr I S McCullough

## Constitution & Governance

Silverbirch Evangelical Church or SEC is an independent local church dating back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was known as Holborn Hall. The church is currently constituted by a Trust Deed dated 04 October 2018 which replaced the previous governing documents of 22 February 2015 and 15 October 2012.

The Trustees have legal responsibility for the church and meet at least twice a year. Day-to-day oversight of its affairs, with agreed terms of reference, is delegated to three committees, one of elders, one of deacons and the Premises Committee. Each of these committees may delegate responsibilities further in any way that is conducive to the administration of the charity.

## Purposes of the Charity

The church was set up to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ, both in belief and faith and in the outworking of that faith in practical terms for the benefit of the world at large. This is reflected in its Vision Statement:

“To be a growing and maturing community of believers united by devotion to Jesus Christ as Lord, love to one another and knowing, obeying and proclaiming the Word of God while seeking to reach out to our neighbourhood with all the resources God has given us.”

It applies its income and energies to the following objects:

- a. To advance the gospel of Jesus Christ among the general public, in accordance with biblical principles and practice both in the UK and abroad in a manner consistent with the church’s statement of faith;
- b. To prevent or relieve poverty among those in hardship;
- c. To relieve those in need due to their adverse circumstances; and
- d. To advance education among those who are unable to avail of education due to their adverse circumstances.

## Statutory Guidance Statement

The Trustees hereby confirm that this report has been prepared in the light of “The Charities (Accounts & Reports) Regulations (NI) 2015” and agreed with full regard to the Commission’s Public Benefit Requirement statutory guidance.

## Fulfilment of Purposes

Purpose a) While it is difficult to assess achievements when the purpose is spiritual and qualitative in nature, it is clear that the members of the church are a vibrant community who seek to share their faith both individually and collectively through activities within and outside of the church. People have come to faith for the first time and members have been reinforced in their faith through Bible teaching and associated activities. Two members have continued to serve with Christian organisations in Northern Ireland, in supporting students.

During the period SEC has continued to support some Christian workers whose sphere of service is outside Northern Ireland. Our missionary family is fully active in

Moldova and under the auspices of their local church are engaged in sharing the gospel and meeting the needs of an impoverished local people.

The Trustees gain personally from the teaching of the church in fulfilling this purpose but only in the same way as any member of the church, or indeed of the public.

Purpose b) & c) Members of the congregation give generously to fulfil these purposes and their donations have allowed us to respond to needs, as they have arisen, where people find themselves in hardship for whatever reason. Any potential harm by causing individuals to rely on the support has been mitigated by its temporary nature. Supply is criteria-driven and controlled, and so only issued in the case of genuine emergencies. The church continues to support a local foodbank with donations of foodstuff on a regular basis.

The work of our missionaries in Moldova and of our members responsible for Shades of Hope has also contributed significantly to these purposes.

Purpose d) In keeping with its policy of providing opportunity for the congregation to support at least one Third World charity, the church again provided regular financial support to Shades of Hope, an organisation set up to promote the welfare of children in Uganda by removing them from the dangers of living on the streets and providing activities for their development. Shades of Hope envisions a Ugandan community where all people irrespective of their wealth and background, have access to the fundamental needs of life, including education and donates funds for school fees, uniforms, meals and school supplies.

## Activities and Achievements

2022 was a year that saw a recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in that most activities returned to normal and attendance at Sunday services was restored. Some new activities commenced.

Each year the leadership of every activity in the church report to the Trustees and Elders who in turn collate these responses in a full report to the congregation as a whole on the activities carried out during the year. The following summarised reports are based on that Annual Report and are offered here to give a fuller understanding of how the church purposes and objectives are addressed.

The reports show that people are being added to the church, members are stepping up to give sacrificially of their time and effort to see the Christian message proclaimed and people encouraged, God's word is being taught and our young people are growing in their knowledge and love of the Lord.

Please note that the reporting period for the Charity Commission coincides with the financial year for the church, but that the reporting period for most of the activities of the church runs from September to April, but it is to be hoped that despite this disconnect the reports will give an insight into the regular activity of the church.

### **Tree Tots**

Tree Tots had a busy, but fun-filled year with 50+ children and 40 adults on a weekly basis for crafts, play, snack and singing. Through weekly interaction we have built up relationships with the children and their parents or carers. It has been wonderful to watch all the children grow through the year and gain confidence in socialising with others and watching their personalities develop. Parents have expressed their gratefulness in having somewhere to come and have a chance to speak to other adults, get a cup of tea and coffee made for them as well as enjoying the scones, which always go down well! We had a couple of special events throughout the year; Santa visiting the children at our Christmas party and an end-of-year party complete with bouncy castle and inflatable play area.

### **Missionary Focus**

Our missionary focus comprises many different ways of providing the church opportunities to learn more about and support missionary work overseas both practically and through informed prayer. The Ladies Missionary Group had just one visiting speaker, Marilyn Campbell of Zambia currently involved in organising and overseeing a building project.

Containers are still being sent out to Africa, so SEC has been able to send parcels to Zambia as in the past. These contained clothing and gifts which could be used as Sunday School prizes. Others held baby layettes, each one made up with knitted or crocheted items as well as nappies and baby toiletries to be given to new mothers in the Maternity Hospital.

As in previous years we also provided packages for the Seamen's Christmas parcels, distributed in Belfast port.

As well as missionary focus for ladies, there have been a number of other opportunities to support and learn of mission work by the wider fellowship. At a coffee event we learnt about Meninadanca which is a charity which works with trafficked and vulnerable young girls in Brazil. The group who came included young women who had been rescued through the programme and they told their own very moving stories. There was a strong sense that what is being done is an outworking of God's love in desperate situations.

At another coffee morning we heard from a student how she was just about to leave for her Gap year aboard Operation Mobilization's Logos Hope. Living on a ship with many different nationalities has specific challenges; there are practical issues, there is adjustment to different cultures, there is working in confined spaces, there are storms and seasickness, all with the aim of opening up the ship to large numbers of visitors in each port. The ship had an amazing reception in Iraq, the first opening into the Arab world.

Other reports included news from missionaries who are now back in Greece and able to stay for longer visits now that travel restrictions have eased. They are still heavily involved with refugees, and are finally able to work on completing the camp centre which should be in use soon.

In the autumn we heard the moving and inspiring story of a man who turned to Christ from a Muslim background. He continues to work on translations to provide literature for reaching out to Muslims.

The emphasis on teaching and producing literature was also one of the aspects highlighted when we had the report from Mission Africa (MA). Working in Burkina Faso, Chad, Nigeria and Kenya within the different contexts of extreme poverty and wealth, the usefulness of literature and the need for teaching is a definite focus for the Mission.

Renewed contact was made when 'Kids4school' came along to update us on the ongoing projects in Tanzania. It was 5 years since we last heard from the organisation and it was so encouraging to hear of the child sponsorship programmes, the water purification equipment that has been installed, the building projects and the new administration block that is now well under way in that part of the world.

### **Home Group**

Our home group meets each Thursday evening from September to June each year. The group numbers 14 with usually at least 10-12 in attendance each week. After tea and coffee and a short time of prayer we then have a Bible study. This year we have been working our way through 1 Corinthians. We always seek to give time to discuss each passage in line with the level of contribution made by the group members. Accordingly, we can sometimes spend an entire week on a single question while at other times we can cover several in one evening. As we have discovered over the parallel ministry on 1 Corinthians on Sundays there have been many practical and challenging issues to address. It has proved to be a real blessing for the group as a whole and we look forward to whatever will follow when our new season begins in the autumn.

### **SEC on Sunday**

Our regular worship and teaching service was back to normal in 2022 but technology that proved essential through the pandemic is still used to extend the reach and impact of our teaching programme.

DVDs and audio CDs are also produced and distributed to those without Internet access who are unable to be present.

Additional teaching was achieved by links to online audio teaching being emailed out each Saturday evening.

### **SEC Children's Church**

Numbers this past year have varied considerably, with occasional visitors adding to the total which remains small due to a lack of children of the appropriate age. We endeavour to provide age-appropriate and engaging follow-up activities and discussion to reinforce the lessons and the younger children in particular enjoy the practical activities. This year we have used a variety of resources (books and DVDs)

We had a 2022 summertime Bible craft, when a Bible verse or story was illustrated by fun craft activities and in autumn we followed the church plan, exploring the story of Joseph and his family on their many adventures. For our Nativity, the children told the Christmas story in their own words as a pre-recorded voice-over to go with their videoed actions.

In the New Year, the children looked at some of the amazing miracles of Jesus and discovered that He has authority over nature, disease and death and has power to provide and to save because he is the Son of God. This led into the story of Easter and an opportunity to give the children two Easter Story Puzzle pamphlets from the Good Book Company.

After Easter, we remembered how Peter met Jesus, how he learned from Jesus, how he betrayed Jesus and how he was forgiven and given a job to do. We are now exploring some of the exciting things that Peter and his friends in the early church did.

### **Schools Work**

Scripture Union E3 Schools Workers have the amazing opportunity of leading school assemblies, supporting SU groups and taking a variety of lessons in schools all over NI. SEC takes the opportunity to support this work both financially and through volunteering.

For example Ballymagee Primary held three “Amazing Jesus” lessons with two P5 classes. These fun, interactive lessons include activities such as quizzes, challenges and drama and present three miracles of Jesus – Feeding 5000, Calming the Storm and Healing of Blind Bartimaeus. Other lessons were designed to help P7 children to prepare for the changes, choices and challenges as they move to post primary school. The ‘It’s Your Move’ book which each child received, is described as ‘your secondary school survival guide’ and is full of practical tips to help the first days and weeks go smoothly. These books are funded by SEC. The lessons encourage the children to look forward to an exciting stage in their lives while the stories of Daniel and Joshua help them to see how they might cope with the challenges ahead.

“The Amazing Journey” is run by Baptist Youth and returned to schools following Covid. The children were taken on a journey through the Bible as they moved around a large central display. At various stages the children met and heard Bible Characters telling their stories. Children had an opportunity to dress up in Bible time costumes and taste Bible time food. Each child received an Amazing Journey pack including follow-up activities and a copy of Luke’s gospel plus invitations to our Holiday Bible Club, to SEC Kids or for P7s, SEC Youth.

### **SEC Youth**

Each Friday night we meet with around 15-20 young people. Although this is a small group, only around 5 or 6 have any church connections and the rest are friends that people have invited or people that we have got to know over the years. Some of these young people are learning about Jesus for the first time or have maybe only heard stories as young children or in school. This is a really exciting opportunity to be able to share both what it means to be a Christian and also to share who Jesus is and why that impacts our lives. We start each Friday night by having time to talk to the young people and have a tuck shop which has been a real success this year. This is a great time to hear how their week has been and it has been so encouraging to see them feeling comfortable to share with us and each other.

After this, one of the SEC Youth leaders gives a short talk. Throughout the year we have looked at various themes of how God makes a difference in our lives when it comes to change, worry, forgiveness etc. We have also looked at what it means to love one another by going through 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Since Easter we have then been looking at the seven “I am” statements of Jesus to try and show the young people who Jesus really is and why this should impact our lives. This has been a real highlight with many of them saying “I am the Good Shepherd” as one that has really stood out to them.

There have been many encouraging conversations and questions with the young people feeling more open to share. Some have been saying how they have been seeing God working in their lives throughout this year.

Games included rounders, dodgeball, messy games and trips to mini golf or for ice cream. We are so blessed with a group of young people who care for and love one another and who welcome new people in so well!

Youth Fellowship meets two Sunday nights a month. Although there are only around 5 or 6 young people who attend, this is a great opportunity to go deeper into Bible studies and prayer. We seek to approach this in a way that serves the young people in our church well and allows them to deepen their faith to be lifelong disciples.

### **Young Adults Bible Study**

This is organised for young people in the church who seek to grow in their knowledge of God and understanding of the Scriptures. We started this year with bi-weekly Bible studies in the book of Acts and averaged 6-8 people attending each time. We also introduced ‘Study Triangles/Squares’. These are small groups of 3-5 people who meet regularly. We have strategically placed experienced people in each group to help lead and disciple others in a peer discipleship format. We have three male and three female groups currently with 24 people engaged. It has been encouraging to hear what this smaller group format has meant to those for whom a larger group was intimidating. The groups meet at times which suit their members which means almost all are committed to attend. We have started with all

groups studying the book of James and we have been blessed talking through this very practical book of the Bible.

### **In-Reach**

The in-reach team recognise that we all long to belong, we were created to live in community, and we thrive when we are connected with fellow believers in godly community. Community is where we form relationships and friendships with other believers, support each other, build social currency, have fun together and enjoy the family of God. The in-reach team's goal is to encourage an atmosphere of community within the church.

In 2022 we hosted Shinefest and enjoyed an evening interacting with family and friends from the church and the local community. This was an opportunity for us to host and welcome people into the church for a fun alternative to Halloween. For men we had a Pizza and World Cup football night, and for the women in the run up to Christmas we enjoyed a wreath making workshop.

Christmas saw the return of Carols in the Car-park alongside a variety of other Christmas events in church. We have hosted two board-game nights, celebrated Mother's Day and Father's Day, hosted an end of year party, had a Saturday morning walk and coffee at Crawfordsburn and started a visitation team. This visitation team started before Christmas with the delivery of Christmas baskets to those who may find getting out more challenging and continued in the run up to Easter with treat basket deliveries. Additionally, outside of these times we have had people visiting others more regularly. These times spent together often with a cup of tea are a delight, hearing stories, talking about what people have been reading in God's Word and at times praying together has been really encouraging.

We are excited for the work God has been doing and continues to do in building community within our church as we reach into our congregation and out into our wider community.

### **SEC Kids**

This academic year we started up a new kid's club for all children in primary school – 'SEC Kids'. We met every Friday night from November to the end of June. Each night we start with games such as relay races, obstacle courses and parachute games. These games would include all the children, with some 1 to 1 games, like Connect-4, for those who preferred to sit out. We have a Bible story, quiz, songs and occasionally craftwork.

We used a book called "I AM – 40 Reasons to Trust God" for our weekly story. Each night we had a quiz and/or a craft to help recap the story. The leaders had lots of creative quiz ideas and challenges for the children once they had answered a question, which they really enjoyed. Craft time was also a great opportunity to chat to the children and build relationships with them.

We had a few theme/party nights throughout the year; we made soda bread pizzas, a sign using the children's painted handprints; we had a nativity themed pass-the-parcel and a visit from Santa at our Christmas Party; for Valentine's Day and Pancake Tuesday we made heart shaped waffles and pancakes and for St. Patrick's Day and Mother's Day we decorated biscuits.

We were also able to welcome parents in for tea, coffee and treats whilst club was on.

### **Holiday Bible Week**

There were over 100 children through the church doors for a week in July for our Holiday Bible Club week.

Our club theme was Lego and the title 'Kingdom Builders' and through the week we looked at 4 Bible stories with the children:

- The Master Builder: The Creation Story;
- The Boat Builder: The Story of Noah;
- The House Builders: The Wise and Foolish Builders;
- The Mansion Builder: Based on John 14:2-6.

The Family Fun Night was well supported by friends and relatives of the children, and there was a short talk for the children and their parents. There was also a programme of stories, quizzes, craft, memory verses and much more.

### **Alpha**

Alpha at SEC, now in its second year, met weekly over a 13 week period. Each week around 25 people attended, 5 of whom were new to the church. We were pleased to welcome others from SEC who contributed to the discussions and conversations around topics covered by the Alpha course. Some of our own young people attended leading to a renewed commitment. Some of our guests expressed interest in a follow up and some have continued to engage with us either through Sunday services, our church ministries or coffee catch ups.

### **The Turtle family – Moldova**

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia brought fear and uncertainty to Moldova. As the refugees poured into Moldova, the local churches and OM mobilised to help these desperate people. As heart breaking as it was to hear their stories and see families displaced and separated by war, it was wonderful to see Christians working together and demonstrating God's love practically. Many opportunities arose to share our faith and we know that some of the Ukrainian refugees came to faith in Jesus.

Our time in Criuleni came to an end and the move to Șoldănești has proved to be a good one. We have a new church family, the girls have friends and the Pastor has a heart and vision for church planting. We were able to start a new children's program and outreach meeting in Cotiujenii. When we started there were four believers in the village but now there are seven. At the children's program we have 10-12 kids each Friday and Saturday. Thanks to our generous supporters we are also able to give the children a simple meal at each meeting. Other activities include summer children's camps, summer outreach and evangelism.

### **Shades of Hope**

A trip to Uganda provided the opportunity to catch up with the on-going work in Shades of Hope and the workers. We are so thankful for their dedication to the work and, more especially, to the children. Like every charity, Shades of Hope has been adversely affected by escalating costs of materials as well as fuel prices. The workers must travel to and from Kampala and to the homes of the boys to monitor progress and to keep a close watch on the various programmes and we recompense their costs. School materials, cost of meals and medical bills are all increasing but we are prioritising the support and welfare of the children above all else.

We have 100+ young people being supported through our Child Sponsorship programme. Some 13 boys now occupy our 'Halfway House' and have been placed in a partnering school receiving an education while awaiting resettlement if deemed appropriate. We have supported 3 business start-ups over the year giving people the means and the dignity of supporting themselves and their families by providing materials to begin small businesses.

We are ever thankful to those who pray for us, for those who sponsor children and for the support of the SEC fellowship, without which Shades of Hope would not be possible.

### **Foodbank Bangor**

SEC continues its affiliation with Bangor Foodbank and has continued to provide food donations.

## **Risk Management**

### **1) Financial**

The Trustees are content with the financial results for the year. The church relies almost exclusively on income received from the freewill offerings of the congregation, given as the outworking of their faith, to maintain the church activities and to express their love and concern for others. As such, generating income is not a primary objective of the church.

Both income and expenditure were up in comparison to the previous year, and once again expenditure outpaced income. Trustees are aware that this trend will need to be managed prudently and some attention given to encourage greater regular income. Although the current balance is low, financial projections show that they will be able to meet all on-going commitments in the year ahead. Appropriate measures are in place regarding the handling of cash and the use of the church accounts.

## 2) REPUTATIONAL


The members of the church fellowship are committed to the nurturing, protecting and safekeeping of the children and young people entrusted to its care. The safety of children and young people in SEC is paramount. Volunteers take time to build appropriate relationships with attendees.

All volunteers involved in children's work and/or working with young people are required to be 'cleared' by AccessNI. Likewise, trustees, elders and deacons require Enhanced Disclosure certification.

SEC leaders and volunteers continue to be vigilant regarding the safety of the children and young people in their care. There have been no safeguarding reports made in the past year. In 2022 forty-one volunteers had completed, or were in the process of completing, their Enhanced Disclosure. Today this number stands at 51, including those from outside SEC, volunteering with this year's summer scheme.

It is planned that more advanced and bespoke training, building on that undertaken in March 2022, will be completed by end of 2024. Tailored training will provide scenarios for group discussion to support volunteers in their identification and management of safeguarding situations.

The Trustees of Silverbirch Evangelical Church submit their Annual Report

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:  (Ian McCullough)

## Appendix

### SILVERBIRCH EVANGELICAL CHURCH (SEC) STATEMENT OF FAITH

#### **THE BIBLE:**

The Bible, as originally given, is inspired by God. Through it God speaks to us and every word is infallible. It is our only authority for what we believe and practice.

#### **GOD:**

There is only one God revealed as three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three are one God, co-eternal and co-equal.

#### **THE LORD JESUS CHRIST:**

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became man being conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He is both eternal God and a perfect, sinless man. Through His death on Calvary's cross He has provided the way by which sinful people can be reconciled to a Holy God and brought into a right relationship with Him. His death is the only sacrifice for sin and through it there is freedom from both the guilt and penalty of sin. On the third day after His crucifixion the Lord Jesus Christ was raised bodily from the dead and, in His risen glorified body, He ascended into heaven to the right hand of God the Father from where He will return in person for those who have believed in Him, both living and dead, and together they will be with Him forever.

#### **MAN:**

Man, created by God in His image and likeness, sinned. As a result, all men are sinful and guilty before God and subject to His righteous wrath and condemnation.

### **SALVATION:**

Salvation cannot be earned nor is it deserved but is God's free gift given when a person repents and trusts Jesus Christ, acknowledging Him as both Saviour and Lord. As a

consequence they receive complete forgiveness of sins, become a child of God and receive eternal life which they can never lose. Those who remain unrepentant will not be saved but will suffer eternal punishment in a place prepared by God following a final judgement.

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT:**

The Holy Spirit indwells every believer from the moment of conversion. His major task is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in the life of the believer by increasing Christ-likeness in character and behaviour. It is the Holy Spirit who gives the power to fight sin and to witness to the world. He also gives gifts to build up the church.

### **THE CHURCH:**

There is one universal Church into which all believers are brought at the moment of conversion. Its Head is the Lord Jesus Christ. There are also local churches within the Church universal, of which we are one. The local church is made up of believers and has a threefold purpose:

To praise and worship God which directs its focus upwards (this involves prayer and communion).

To build itself up in love which directs its focus inwards (this involves among other things the development and application of spiritual gifting).

To witness to the world which directs its focus outwards (this involves both sharing the gospel of God's grace and doing acts of kindness in His name to those in need).

It should keep all three of these purposes in balance and seek to express each of them through effective ministry. Membership of the local church brings with it certain responsibilities, central to which is obedience to the Lord's command to love one another as He Himself has loved. This involves praying for one another, encouraging one another, sharing one another's burdens, showing hospitality and actively caring for each member of the church. Responsibilities also include supporting the activities of the church and engaging

in regular financial giving. The local church is self-governing under God, submitted to His Word, the Lordship of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

**ORDINANCES:**

We observe two ordinances i.e. Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that every person who comes to personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is commanded to be baptised.

Baptism expresses in symbolic form the individual's identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. It marks obedience to Jesus Christ as Lord as the basis of a new life. It is the privilege of every believer to take bread and wine in remembrance of their Lord, thus proclaiming His death until He returns. To this meeting we welcome all who have come to personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and who want to obey Him.

**LEADERSHIP:**

The local church has a number of elders. The Holy Spirit calls and qualifies such men to be examples, teachers, pastors and overseers who are to care for the members of the church and maintain discipline in accordance with the Word of God. It is the responsibility of each member to support their elders in all matters of church life.