

THE FOCOLARE TRUST NI

TRUSTEES REPORT

Structure, Governance & Management in Northern Ireland

The charity was established in Northern Ireland under a trust deed dated 4 January 2010.

The trustees are assisted in the planning of the programme of activities by an Extended Focolare group.

Charitable Status

The Trust has been accepted as a charity for tax purposes by the Inland Revenue. The HMRC reference number is: -

XT21933

The Trust has been registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland from 2nd June 2015 under the Charity number:-

NIC102512

Statement of Compliance

In setting our objectives and planning our activities for the year the trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities have helped to achieve the charity's purposes and provide a benefit to the beneficiaries.

Principal Activities

The Focolare Movement is an international organization that began in Italy in 1943 and is now active on all five continents. As an ecclesial movement, it is open to collaborating with people of all faiths or without any faith background. The movement's core aim is to contribute to unity in all areas of life, guided by the gospel message "May they all be one" (Jn 17:21). The headquarters are in Rocca di Papa outside Rome, with operations managed through regional areas that support each other through the international sharing of goods and resources.

Activities in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the Focolare Trust supports community building among people from diverse cultural and faith backgrounds. The spirituality of unity equips individuals with skills for peacebuilding and reconciliation. Focolare Northern Ireland is closely linked with its counterparts in the Republic of Ireland, co-organizing island-wide events. Focolare centres located in Belfast, Dublin, and Prosperous, County Kildare serve as hubs for promoting and coordinating Focolare life and activities within the wider local community.

Focolare members are actively involved in their local churches and communities, working to build bridges across communities and living out the gospel's message of

THE FOCOLARE TRUST NI

unity. Their efforts range from supporting refugees to working with youth, parish and diocesan groups and university chaplaincies.

In December 2023, the Focolare Movement celebrated its 80th anniversary. In Belfast a catholic mass attended by members of several denominations, followed by a light lunch was held in Holy Family Church on the Limestone Road.

An informal walking group inspired by Focolare values meets monthly to engage with people from different cultural backgrounds, fostering friendship and belonging. This group is expanding its outreach to asylum seekers and migrants through open afternoons and held an international cultural night in September 2023.

Formation and Promotion of Unity

Focolare's commitment to evangelization begins with its own members. Through the international centres, the organization produces and distributes leaflets with commentary on the monthly "Word of Life" (a phrase from scripture to live by) and a related daily motto on social media throughout Ireland. These materials form the basis for actions and shared experiences of living out God's Word. The Focolare Trust NI is working to increase its presence on social media, developing content for its website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

The Focolare Trust NI organizes monthly Word of Life meetings, women's lunch groups, and clergy meetings to foster community and sharing among people of different backgrounds. It facilitates the sharing and redistribution of goods to people in need.

Since the pandemic, meetings have been conducted face-to-face or in a hybrid format, allowing greater participation. An annual highlight is the intergenerational gathering which again took place in April 2023 in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, on the theme, "Let's Connect With God, with Each Other, with Nature and with Society".

Cross-Community Initiatives

The Focolare Trust NI promotes and supports various cross-community initiatives that demonstrate Christian denominations working together. Notable examples include the "4 Corners Festival," the "DOCK Café," Unity pilgrims (Clonard Peace and Reconciliation ministry), Embrace NI and events related to the "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity."

In March 2024 Rev. Callan Slipper based in the Focolare in London and Chair of Society for Ecumenical Studies and Trustee of Churches Together in England (former National Ecumenical)Officer for the Church of England), visited Northern Ireland. He has been instrumental in formulating the "Armagh Agreement"-a historic moment facilitating deeper unity between the Moravian Church and the Anglican communion. His visit provided an opportunity to bring together over 20 Church leaders from different denominations in the Focolare for conversation and lunch and Callan shared insights from his experience and his book on receptive ecumenism "Enriched by the Other".

Participation in Inter-Church and Synodal Processes

Focolare NI participates in national Inter-Church Meetings and has been invited to the General Assemblies of the main Christian Churches in Ireland. This year members took part in the 33rd Inter-Church meeting "Our Reconciling Vision of Hope: 50 years since the Ballymascanlon Talks". The Trust is engaged in the ongoing synodal process of the Catholic Church nationally and internationally. NI church leaders take part in international conferences organised by the Focolare, such as, the Bishops'

THE FOCOLARE TRUST NI

meeting in Portugal in August 2023 and the 40th Conference of Bishops of various Churches in Augsburg at the beginning of March 2024.

Focolare EcoPlan

Members continue to support the Focolare EcoPlan, promoting actions for the protection of people and the planet. They are committed as Laudato Si animators, participating in national and European activities. They took part in the “Green Care Webinar” in October 2023, organized at European level on the topic of “Eco Challenges”.

A climate justice programme began in September 2023 during Season of Creation and led to the establishment of an informal network of multi-faith organizations which has become known as “Join the Dots Together”. From 14 organizations it has grown to nearly 100.

A Conference was held on 12th January 2024 with keynote speaker, Lorna Gold of FaithInvest. Join the Dots Together network has set up a website and online calendar to facilitate sharing of information and events about environmental protection and conservation. Collaboration with organizations such as Belfast City Council, NICVA and the Community Relations Council is underway and several events are being organized around International Day of Peace (21st September 2024).

International

Focolare members continue to be active in the #daretocare campaign, which promotes care for the vulnerable and the planet. The project is linked to a social media platform at [United World Project](#).

The Trust facilitates participation at the international level by organizing and accompanying groups to conferences and events focused on developing skills for dialogue, exploring projects for the common good, and supporting fundraising activities. Examples include the Living Peace Project, the United World Project, the FormaT formation programme, and the Together4Europe project.

In June 2023 members took part in a summer gathering in Iceland to support the small Focolare community there. In August 2023 members took part in the World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal.

This year members of Focolare took part in the DialogUE project which held webinars at European level on various aspects of inclusion: 1st March on the Social Inclusion of the Roma people and 22nd March on the Social Inclusion of people with Disabilities. Tony O’Reilly from Derry/Londonderry, a member of Focolare involved in the North West Forum of People with Disabilities, gave one of the keynote inputs.

Focolare Northern Ireland has established “Dialogue for Africa,” a group that fosters relationships between members from Ireland and Africa. Meeting periodically via Zoom, this mutual engagement is enriching for all participants. The group also raises funds to support projects in Africa, such as the “Kindergarten” in Bobo Dioulasso (Burkina-Faso).

Collaboration with other Charities

Members of Focolare Northern Ireland support other registered charities like “Embrace NI”, Corrymeela, the Inter-Faith Forum and Youth Link NI, fostering a more welcoming society, especially for migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees.

THE FOCOLARE TRUST NI

Financial Review

The Trustees have a procedure now in place to review the accounts and to formally draft a Reserves Policy appropriate to the needs and aims of the Trust going forward. The charity's accounts will be prepared each year to 31 March. These accounts cover the year to 31 March 2024 and show a surplus of £2,179

Risk Management

The Trustees are aware of the risks to which the charity may be exposed. A formal risk assessment process and strategies for dealing with identified risk areas is being formalised.

SIGNED: Edmund McGinn DATE: 4/12/2024
Trustee

SIGNED: J.M. DATE: 4/12/24
Trustee