

# TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

PARISH OF CARRICKFERGUS ST NICHOLAS CHURCH (NIC 102652)

The Hon. Treasurer  
Mr Ray Gilbert  
c/o Church Office  
3 Lancasterian Street  
Carrickfergus  
BT38 7AB

**01<sup>ST</sup> January 2023 to 31<sup>ST</sup> December 2023**

## TRUSTEES

The Rev. Christopher St.John, Rev N Ervine (until December 2023), Alan Miles, Linda Mulvenny, Julie Irvine, Katrina Todd, R McNeill ( from April 2023), Sharon Maxwell, Ray Gilbert, Christine Cahoon, Roy McAlister, Ann McVeigh (Deceased August 2023), Tamera Milligan, Valerie Kirk, Dianne Innes, Samuel Stewart, Graeme Miles, Philip O'Neill (from April 2023).

## FINANCES

St Nicholas Church, Carrickfergus total income for 2023 was £ 218,960.17 of which £163.022.25 was voluntary giving from Parishioners. The voluntary giving figure includes Gift Aid tax recovered of £20,208.23 and other donations.

The Parish received £31.271.26 from investment income and £5.760 from rental income.

The Freewill Offering was £122,828.91 in 2023. The Freewill Offering includes weekly envelopes, incoming Parishioner standing orders and loose collections.

Creditor invoices during 2023 were paid either upon receipt or in line with individual company invoicing.

Total resources expended were £237,569.44, this figure includes, stipends salary and associated costs, Diocesan costs, general parochial costs, ongoing property repairs, heating and electricity on properties and other costs associated with worship and wider church activities. The Parish has responsibility for the maintenance of the Church and the Rectory although both properties are vested with the Registered Church Body in Dublin. The Parish also looks after the Church Hall and the properties at Coates Gardens and Macroom Gardens (a former Curatage). The property at Macroom Gardens was rented out in 2023. Church repairs on the general upkeep to properties were carried out costing £57,718.76

Following all transactions, the balances of bank accounts on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 were as follows.

**No 1 Current Account** £14,121.78 in deficit

**No 2 Current Account** £65,075.09 in credit (Dividends from investments with the Church of Ireland Trust. Department for Communities and the Board of Education were received in 2022)

**Allocations Account** £1142.04 in credit – This account uses the 10% of Freewill offering which is allocated to support charitable purposes. The Allocations Committee met in October 2023 and forwarded recommendations for distribution of funds to various groups for approval by the Select Vestry in November 2023. All but one of the allocations were made prior to the end of year.

**Legg Fund Charity Account** £7,505.62 in credit – funds used to assist those in need locally.

The Trustees place a high importance on the security and safeguarding of all monies. Strict dual control is exercised when counting and recording money and transporting it to the Bank. All payments require the signature or authorisation of two Trustees as specified in the Bank mandate.

**Building Project Account** £2,571.57 in credit

This account was established to support restoration work to the church building.

## **MANAGEMENT**

The Finances are managed by the Honorary Treasury in conjunction with the Finance sub-committee. Monthly Select Vestry meetings are held, and the Treasurer provides a report to Trustees outlining all income and expenditure for the previous calendar month. Accounts are scrutinized by an external accountant. Additional meetings are held as required to discuss urgent matters which may arise between normal monthly meetings. Vestry members are elected each year at the General Easter Vestry.

## **PURPOSE**

The principal function of the Parish is to support the advancement of the Christian religion by promoting through the work of the Parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, social and ecumenical. The importance of communicating with parishioners of all ages is recognised by the Parish and visitation of the sick and elderly were undertaken by the clerical team.

The Trustees recognise that we have a valuable historic building to worship in and due care is taken to ensure that the building is maintained to a high standard. There is a sub-committee of the Select Vestry which concerns itself with all matters pertaining to the buildings. This sub-committee forwards recommendations for approval by the Select Vestry. The church adheres to all Church of Ireland guidance on Safeguarding and has an established Safeguarding Panel.

## **PUBLIC BENEFIT**

The Charity Trustees have complied with their duties in line with the Commission's Public Benefit statutory guidance. Regular worship and reaching out into the community have been carried out throughout the year to fulfil our statement of public benefit. Services continued to be made available to view on the church Facebook page. Analysis of the engagement with the online services and messages posted by viewers indicated that not only were Parishioners reached but also a wider community group both locally and internationally. The church provides tours of the building for visiting community groups and opens on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays for general visitors. Organised groups are hosted by arrangement.

Money is regularly raised by Parishioner donations to help the disadvantaged worldwide and the support of other overseas mission work continued. Annually, as indicated above, in December 10% of freewill offering is donated to charitable causes.

## **Church Activities**

### **Coronation**

2023 was a significant year in the history of St Nicholas. The 6<sup>th</sup> of May saw the coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

We marked the event on the Public Holiday on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May with an afternoon Coronation Party. It was great to see the church family come together to Join in the celebrations. We had a great afternoon of quizzes, games, food and brass band accompaniment which many people will remember for years to come.

### **Building**

It was also a notable year because permission was applied for to conduct work on our spire. This permission was granted, and a contract entered into, and all the substantive work was completed by Christmas.

The highest priority works involved pointing and stone repairs to the Baptistry roof and the west side of the church tower, leadwork to the west side of the tower and bell louvre repairs on the tower.

We also had to replace the West Window and have a protective banister installed.

A fund raising committee was set up by the vestry and a grant was applied for to the National Churches Trust.

A buy a brick initiative was launched and championed by Church Warden Philip O'Neill who did a wonderful job in generating publicity and ensuring the buy in of local business.

A Parishioner Launched a Knitted Journey through the bible in November with the Lord Mayor of Mid and East Antrim opening the event. There were afternoon teas to accompany, and the event was so popular that it has even travelled to Limavady for an exhibition there. There were a variety of other fundraising initiatives, and the whole church got behind with a variety of fundraising initiatives.

### **Church Opening**

One of the requirements of the funding we have received from the National Churches trust is that the church is open 100 days a year.

We had been opening on Saturdays from 12-2 and we added to this Tuesday mornings from 9-11 and Tuesday afternoons from 2-330 and Wednesday from 1030-12.

It has been incredible to see so many people from Carrickfergus come into the Church and it has been a privileged to minister to them.

But it has also opened further opportunities as we are now a major part of the City Deal initiative to bring tourism to Carrickfergus. Andrea and I have been very closely with the National Churches Trust and the council to maximise future Tourism opportunities for the church.

### **Curate**

Another major development during the year was the appointment of our Curate to Church of the Good Shepherd Monkstown.

Our Curate had a passion for preaching and contemporary worship. He and his wife led the monthly contemporary worship evening and established a 20's and 30's group in the curatage.

They were keen advocates of the annual new wine event in Sligo and were keen to introduce others to it. He has also managed the youth fellowship and attended "Connor Takes the Castle" and "Summer Madness" events.

### **Parish Readers**

Six Parish readers are licensed by the Bishop to lead morning and evening prayer services and act in support of the Rector.

Readers underwent training in the Book of Common Prayer, church history and Creed. They were approved by Rev Peter Jones the Diocesan coordinator and commissioned by him on 22 October, the same day as our confirmation service with Bishop Davison.

Though some people were initially apprehensive about the introduction of parish readers, they quickly proved showed they could provide a positive complement to the services through their ministries.

As the Church moves forward there is an increasing reliance on Lay ministries of various kinds to support the life and work of the Church.

### **Bible Studies**

We continue to run a number of weekly bible study groups to help people in their discipleship and faith formation.

In 2023 we studied Prayer, The Creed, Heaven and the purpose of Christmas. Personal Bible study and reflection is vital in every Christian life however corporate bible study Bible study is often overlooked yet was a daily activity for the New Testament Church.

## **Services**

The most visible interface for the church is during our Sunday services. We continue to provide three services every Sunday plus a mid-week Holy Communion. Each Sunday we have continued a children's talk which has proved popular with children and adults alike. The compline service has proved to be a regular feature every 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday and gives time for quiet reflection.

Over Easter 2023 we supported the work of Mission Carrick.

On Palm Sunday our organisations were present and on Good Friday we had a morning service and our second Tenebrae service which keeps going from strength to strength.

On Easter day celebrated Holy Communion as a parish.

In May 2023 we had a special service for North Irish Horse regiment to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the taking of the Hitler line in Germany.

We had 2 teenagers going forward for Confirmation and they were confirmed by Bishop George on 22 October in the same service as the parish readers.

We also had the usual service on Remembrance Sunday.

On 25<sup>th</sup> November we again hosted the Carrickfergus Civic Carol Service with the Lord Mayor.

In December we again had the service of Remembrance, Celebration and thanksgiving and people had the opportunity to leave a Christmas poinsettia.

We had our Nativity play and 9 lessons and carols with our Choir and Organist –  
On Christmas Eve we had a family service complete with special seasonal "Jingle bells"  
We also special services for midnight communion and of course our Christmas day with our Helium Sheep.  
We have also had collections for Food Bank and the Baby Bank.

## **Music**

Our talented organist and Choir director and the members of the choir continue to support our Sunday worship.

At Harvest the choir were joined by a guest organist

The music group has stepped up following the departure of the Curate's wife and they now lead worship at each family service, they are working towards a monthly contemporary service commencing in the coming months.

## **Women's Fellowship**

In February the women's fellowship were joined by a speaker from The South American Mission Society (Sams). Speakers also included the City Director Belfast for the CS Lewis

Institute. Fun evenings were also had at a pottery workshop in Straid and a Spring outing to Glenarm Castle and a visit to Inver Nurseries.

The women's fellowship also ran a Mr and Mrs Parish Evening and a craft sale and cake fair to raise funds for the parish restoration work.

### **The Men's Group**

Have enjoyed talks from HM Cost Guard and explored climate and sustainability. They also enjoyed a hearty breakfast at Dobbins. A local historian gave a great talk on 'Great County Antrim Folk'.

### **Senior moments**

The Senior moments group for the over fifties continued to enjoy a varied schedule. Through a variety of activities such as Games Afternoons , talks, Summer Outing, Tea Dance, Music Quiz Bop with Babs (armchair aerobics) and Christmas Craft,

### **CRAFT GROUP**

This group continues to meet on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday Mornings with a variety of crafts activities and coffee drinking.

It provides a forum for regular relaxed friendship building - Knit and Natter.

### **CHURCH BOWLING CLUB.**

The Bowling club continues to meet on Mondays at about 7 pm and have good relationships with members of local churches through competition.

### **20's and 30's Life Group**

Our 20's & 30's Life Group met every other Wednesday evening in the Curate's house. They covered a course Discipleship explored and Rick Hill's book, Deep Roots of Resilient Disciples. At the end of March, they had a social evening at Prison Island in Belfast.

### **Youth Fellowship**

The Youth Fellowship unfortunately struggled to attract regular attendance throughout 2023.

Several young people attended "Summer Madness", and "Connor Takes the Castle" but this did not translate into regular attendance at weekly meetings. On many evenings it was cancelled,

A new format is being launched in 2024. Please pray for people with a passion for youth ministry to be called into this role in the church.

### **Jam Bible Class**

Members of Jam and Bible Class contributed regularly to Sunday worship both through participation in the children's talk and through leading us in prayer during the monthly family service.

They have studied broadly across the bible looking at servanthood and Jesus as "The Way and The Truth and The Life". and the "I AM" Statements and The Vine. They have also looked at the crucifixion and man characters such as Ruth, Paul and Elijah

Three leaders attended a Makaton Level 1 course as part of their continuing professional development and also a development day during September in Broughshane.

The year rounded off with the Salvation Army Santa Appeal, which received a great response once again. Everyone enjoyed the Nativity play and the children caused great amusement on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

### **The Holiday Bible Club**

The Holiday Bible Club for primary school aged children ran in July following an absence of several years due to Covid. It was Great to have some new volunteers come forward.

Our Busy Bees also continued to meet, this is a wonderful opportunity for children and on many occasions their parents to be introduced to St Nicholas.

**Events**

Several events occurred throughout the year to bring the Parish together including the Coronation Party and Parish May day outing to Tollymore  
At Christmas we had A Big Christmas Quiz and A screening of Home Alone

**Baptisms**

There were 5 Baptisms during the year.

**Funerals**

16 Funerals were conducted in 2023

**Safeguarding**

Compliance packs created and circulated to all people working with children ensured everyone had received an up-to-date policy, completed their annual review and were asked for appropriate references.

A raft of Policies was approved by the Vestry in 2023 these include.

Code of behavior, Anti- Bullying policy, complaints policy, communications policy, disciplinary grievance, and partnership policy

Two sets of training were conducted at St Nicholas

**Signed Ray Gilbert  
Honorary Treasurer  
St Nicholas Church of Ireland, Carrickfergus**