

## CASTLEREAGH FELLOWSHIP TRUSTEES' REPORT 2022-2023

The following report covers the period 1/4/22 to 31/3/23.

### CHARITY DETAILS

Castlereagh Fellowship is an independent Christian church. While its origin is dated back to October 1993, it was reconstituted in April 2015 and it has been registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland since 1/7/15.

Castlereagh Fellowship's Charity Registration Number is 103012.

Castlereagh Fellowship's public address is:

206 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6QD

Castlereagh Fellowship has a membership of around 75 adults, plus approximately 20 juniors in regular attendance.

### GOVERNANCE

Castlereagh Fellowship is a Charitable Trust which operates under the governing principles of its Trust Deed as dated 26/4/15. Castlereagh Fellowship operates with five Trustees: Dr Nigel McIlrath, Mr Patric Kells, Miss Maggi Chesney, Miss Lynn Magee, and Mr Michael Hulland (the latter is currently working overseas). The Trustees assume responsibility for the overall administration of Castlereagh Fellowship, including compliance with legal requirements and sound financial practice. They are appointed by the Elders of Castlereagh Fellowship and agree to operate under their direction in matters of a spiritual nature. The current Trustees include two of the three Elders of Castlereagh Fellowship and together they exercise a duty of care to its members. During the period covered by this report, the Trustees held regular meetings as stipulated by the Fellowship's Trust Deed, minutes of which were kept and circulated by the Chair. Castlereagh Fellowship's Annual General Meeting was held in June 2022 and was well-attended by its membership.

The website [www.castlereaghfellowship.com](http://www.castlereaghfellowship.com) provides information on the leadership and operation of Castlereagh Fellowship.

### PURPOSES

The purposes of Castlereagh Fellowship are set out in its Trust Deed as follows:

1. "To advance the Christian faith in accordance with Castlereagh Fellowship's Statement of Belief in such ways and in such parts of the UK and the world as the Trustees from time to time may think fit."
2. "To relieve sickness and financial hardship and to promote and preserve good health by the provision of funds, goods or services of any kind, including through the provision of counselling and support in such parts of the UK or the world as the Trustees from time to time may think fit."
3. "To advance education in such ways and in such parts of the UK or the world as the Trustees from time to time may think fit."

## SPHERE OF OPERATION

Castlereagh Fellowship is based in East Belfast, Northern Ireland. As of June 11<sup>th</sup> 2018, Castlereagh Fellowship has owned its own premises based in East Belfast at 206 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6QD. Prior to this development, the Fellowship used hired premises, namely Greenway Women's Centre and Cregagh Community Centre for its corporate meetings. The Fellowship still draws members from the Cregagh District of East Belfast, alongside others from the Braniel estate and from as far away as Bangor, Dromore and Listooder in County Down. As a consequence of its financial and practical support, it has an impact beyond the UK, affecting persons in several overseas countries.

## BENEFICIARIES

The intended beneficiaries of Castlereagh Fellowship consist of the following groups:

1. The members of Castlereagh Fellowship where the goal is to nourish individuals in the development of their Christian faith and practice.
2. The local community in terms of being presented with the claims of the Christian faith and support by way of pastoral and practical assistance.
3. Children in the local area and in local schools in terms of learning the basics of the Christian faith in respect of its beliefs and morals.
4. Christian missionaries and mission organisations seeking to bring the Christian message to people whether domestically or overseas.
5. Christians in countries around the world where they are the victims of persecution for their beliefs and practices.
6. People in other countries who are the victims of natural and humanitarian disasters such as famine or war.

## FINANCIAL POSITION

Castlereagh Fellowship's income for the 2022-2023 financial year was £108,038. This constituted a reduction of 8.9% on the previous year but still represented a considerable sum for a relatively small membership. Of this sum, £60,745 (or 56%) qualified for Gift Aid. What is particularly pleasing is that members and supporters gave over £14,000 for humanitarian purposes (including for persecuted Christians and the victims of both floods in Pakistan and the earthquake in Turkey and Syria). This reflects the continued "outward focus" which has been hard-wired into Castlereagh Fellowship's culture.

Castlereagh Fellowship's expenditure for the 2022-2022 financial year was £117,144, a decrease of 3.0% on the previous year. The Trustees derive great pleasure from the fact that Castlereagh Fellowship was able to allocate £35,700 to Mission & Advocacy, and a further £10,677 for Relief Projects and £9,773 in respect of the aforementioned Special Collections. Together with spending on mission-orientated Literature of £5,510, this adds up to £61,660 or 52.6% of the Fellowship's overall expenditure. Whilst this is down from a record high of almost 60% in 2021-2022, it is the second highest percentage total in Castlereagh Fellowship's history, and again is testament to members' concern both to share the Christian Gospel and to help alleviate material suffering in our world.

Castlereagh Fellowship's ran an overall deficit for the 2022-2023 financial year of £9,106. There was a deficit in Restricted Funds of £6,918 which was financed by a transfer of this amount from Unrestricted Funds so as to keep our Restricted Funds balance at zero. Prior to this transfer, there was a deficit of £2,108 in Unrestricted Funds, and the combined deficit of £9,106 was financed by running down the Fellowship's bank reserves by

this amount, meaning that our bank balance now stands at £70,195. The Fellowship is now due a Gift Aid Rebate of £15,186. Thus we continue to occupy a very healthy financial position. Over the course of the incoming year, we expect to reduce our bank balance as the Trustees have no wish for the Fellowship to sit on "excess" funds and as we seek to support more missionary and relief situations as they arise.

The value of Castlereagh Fellowship's monetary and physical assets as at 31/3/23 (including the pending Gift Aid rebate based upon the past year's donations) is estimated by the Trustees to be around £390,000, with £285,000 of this constituting our estimate of the current value of our premises.

Castlereagh Fellowship possesses neither any current liabilities nor any debts outstanding.

The Trustees are given financial updates by the Treasurer of Castlereagh Fellowship at their quarterly meetings. In addition, the Treasurer prepares a financial summary for the Elders' monthly meetings. A Financial Report is submitted for approval by members at the Fellowship's Annual General Meeting.

The Trustees have sought to ensure that Castlereagh Fellowship has complied with its legal obligations regarding financial practice through the independent examination of its accounts.

A summary of Castlereagh Fellowship's Receipts and Payments, and a Statement of Assets and Liabilities, is submitted annually to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

#### PUBLIC BENEFIT

In setting our objectives and planning our objectives for the year, the Trustees considered the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit in an attempt to guarantee that Castlereagh Fellowship's activities have aided the achievement of the Fellowship's purposes and provision of benefit to its intended beneficiaries.

The anticipated public benefit resulting from the activities of Castlereagh Fellowship is three-fold:

1. The advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ among the general public, resulting in lives lived in a law-abiding and morally responsible manner.
2. The prevention or relief of poverty suffered by people whether locally or internationally by means of financial, material and practical support.
3. The advancement of education among the general public by means of financial and practical support.

#### ACTIVITIES AND PUBLIC BENEFIT

In the following section of the report, the Trustees attempt to show how the activities engaged in by Castlereagh Fellowship relate to its 3-fold public benefit goal (as above) in terms of:

Outputs – what Castlereagh Fellowship has done.

Outcomes – what Castlereagh Fellowship has achieved.

Impact – an overall assessment of the difference Castlereagh Fellowship has made.

- OUTPUTS

Regarding the advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ among the general public, Castlereagh Fellowship held a weekly Sunday morning worship service in which the Word of God was taught to adults and children alike. We also held a weekly Sunday evening service which consists of a variety of meetings such as mission reports, sharing evenings, and specialist teaching on contemporary topics. Many of our talks have been uploaded onto Castlereagh Fellowship's YouTube channel for members of other churches and the general public to view. This includes our Wednesday evening Bible teaching, when we also hold a weekly prayer meeting.

The Fellowship's Adventurers' Bible Club met throughout the year. These meetings have been attended by around 12 children of primary school age plus a couple of pre-teen "helpers"; the children were introduced to Bible stories in a creative and interactive way.

Castlereagh Fellowship's Little Mites Toddlers' Group has met faithfully throughout the year, operating at maximum capacity with around 25 parents/guardians plus kids in attendance. This is proving very popular with the local community.

Another ministry of Castlereagh Fellowship which has continued to operate is a women's Explorers' discipleship class. This involves ten-plus women meeting on alternate Tuesday mornings to study the Bible together in a conversational manner. In addition, Castlereagh Fellowship's Ladies' Fellowship Group has met on the first Friday of each month, while the Fellowship's Men's Work has staged a number of outreach events which are always well-attended by visitors.

We were also delighted to host an inaugural Castlereagh Fellowship Missionary Conference in October 2022, to which we invited three mission representatives to join us for a weekend of updates, culminating in a Fellowship lunch on the Sunday. To coincide with this weekend conference, the Fellowship produced a new Mission, Advocacy and Humanitarian Support Guide with details of the many missions/ missionaries and advocacy and relief organisations that the Fellowship supports.

One aspect of Castlereagh Fellowship that has continued to flourish is our Literature Ministry. A new book, "Knowing the Good News" has been published, while other booklets have been distributed to our immediate locality and several overseas destinations.

Regarding the prevention/relief of poverty, Castlereagh Fellowship gave over £20,000 in humanitarian assistance in respect of floods, earthquakes, war, economic hardship and persecution. This has been funded by donations from members to our special Relief Projects Fund plus two special Sunday collections.

Regarding the advancement of education, Castlereagh Fellowship was invited to take an assembly in one of our neighbourhood Primary schools, while our weekly Junior and Senior Bible classes and Kids' Club make a contribution to literacy. Castlereagh Fellowship also has given financial support to the work of Bible Educational Services and to Waakisa (the latter helps with school education in Uganda).

- OUTCOMES

Regarding the advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ among the general public, our services have been well-attended and it is pleasing to observe that the number of subscribers to our website has swollen to over 210. Castlereagh Fellowship's literature has been translated into various languages and exported to many countries and is much appreciated by organisations such as Every Home Crusade and Opal Trust and by individual missionaries and evangelists. The weekly Sunday morning "Mission Focus" has kept Castlereagh Fellowship members abreast of various missionary situations and needs. Missionaries and mission organisations that have benefited from Castlereagh Fellowship's financial and prayerful support have sent many letters of acknowledgement and appreciation. In the past year, we added two new missionaries to our core missions, missionary families or advocacy organisations; we are committed to financial support of a

combined total of £8,400 per annum. In addition, we have given one-off gifts of £5,000 to two mission organisations in the past year, and £2,500 as the second instalment of a two-year commitment to another. A commitment to world mission is part of the DNA of Castlereagh Fellowship. Indeed, as already mentioned, Castlereagh Fellowship spent close to £36,000 in the support of mission and advocacy during the past financial year.

Members of Castlereagh Fellowship enjoy a good reputation in the community, being seen as responsible citizens and reliable partners. We have maintained good relations with our immediate neighbours with no complaints as to our activities or behaviour.

In respect of the prevention/relief of poverty, Castlereagh Fellowship has seen its members develop their sense of commitment to people who are enduring genuine hardship. As a result of special collections and directed gifts via our "Relief Projects" Fund, Castlereagh Fellowship was able to give considerable sums to people living in situations of hardship. Giving has continued to transcend narrow national or racial grounds. Castlereagh Fellowship has continued to be outward-focused rather than consumed with our own concerns. Our remit is to respond to situations of need borne out of Jesus Christ's command to love all people, irrespective of their background.

In respect of the advancement of education, Castlereagh Fellowship has made some contribution to children's education through financial giving and via its Adventurers' Bible Club and weekly Junior and Senior Bible classes. We have also confirmed dates for re-engaging with the Baptist Union's Amazing Journey programme which will see us return to a local primary school in the autumn of 2023.

- IMPACT

It is the Trustees' opinion that Castlereagh Fellowship has continued to make a significant positive impact in terms of public benefit over the period in question. There is no doubt that members have been supported in their Christian faith and many people have been presented with the claims of Jesus Christ. Our online presence has been consolidated, while our Literature ministry has continued to blossom.

The Trustees have been delighted at how the Fellowship has continued to ensure that all members were looked out for, with the Pastoral Care Team deserving of special mention for their vigilance in monitoring and intervening in situations of members' need.

It is also gratifying to report that we have been able to devote significant resources to mission work and the relief of poverty. Such an awareness of and practical concern for the needs of others – especially in countries less wealthy than our own – is part of the warp and woof of Castlereagh Fellowship, and it is the Trustees' judgment that this has been reinforced over the past year as reflected by our spending in these sectors.

The Trustees have acted to ensure that fire prevention, child safeguarding, health and safety, and food hygiene policies are in place. Our Child Protection Officer has overseen the updating of our Safeguarding Policy. We also held a Training Morning in March 2023 for those involved in catering, to ensure all are up to speed with good food hygiene practice.

The Leadership of Castlereagh Fellowship are currently steering the Fellowship through the process of creating a more formal membership arrangement, with new policy documents (including a fresh Guide to Castlereagh Fellowship) clearly setting out the Fellowship's operations and beliefs. We are of the opinion that this will make the Fellowship more robust and facilitate better succession planning. It has been pleasing to see the continued unity and good spirit in which this process has been conducted.

It thus continues to be the opinion of the Trustees that Castlereagh Fellowship is fulfilling its remit in terms of public benefit. Castlereagh Fellowship is relatively small in number but its members tend to be very active and committed Christians who possess a healthy interest in serving others in line with the injunctions of their faith.

#### MITIGATION OF HARM

Castlereagh Fellowship's Child Safeguarding Officer keeps the Trustees informed of any legal developments affecting the Fellowship's operation in terms of children's welfare. Checks are carried out with Access NI to ensure that members who work with children are not considered as posing a risk. The Trustees are not aware of any other potential harm from Castlereagh Fellowship's activities.

#### DATA PROTECTION

In accordance with legal requirements and good practice, all personal details – including financial information – are kept secure, and only used for their specified purposes.

#### PRIVATE BENEFIT

Castlereagh Fellowship has given a regular monthly payment to Mr Geoffrey McIlrath. This is in return for various services which are deemed as essential for the effective functioning of the Fellowship and to the accomplishment of its public benefit obligations. This payment is determined by the Trustees and can be changed or stopped at the Trustees' discretion. The Trustees wish to place on record our appreciation of Mr Geoffrey McIlrath's services during the past year.

This report was agreed at a meeting of the Trustees on

26/6/23

SIGNED:

N. McIlrath

John Kelly

D. Joyce

M. Chesney