

CASTLEREAGH FELLOWSHIP TRUSTEES' REPORT 2023-2024

The following report covers the period 1/4/23 to 31/3/24.

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 an official membership of 67 adults. There is another small number of adults who attend our meetings on an occasional basis. We also have around 20 juniors in regular attendance on a Sunday morning.

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.

During the past year, Castlereagh Fellowship has introduced a more formalised membership and, as aforementioned, 67 persons have now signed the Membership Register. Castlereagh Fellowship's Annual General Meeting was held in June 2023 and was well-attended by its membership.

The website 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 11th 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 as far away as 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 2023-2024 financial year was £121,396. This constituted an increase of 12.4% on the previous year. Of this sum, £64,718 (or 53%) qualified for Gift Aid. What is particularly pleasing is that members and supporters gave almost £30,000 for mission or humanitarian purposes (in Special Collections or Directed Gifts). This reflects the continued "outward focus" which has been hard-wired into Castlereagh Fellowship's culture.

Castlereagh Fellowship's expenditure for the 2023-2024 financial year was £123,814, an increase of 5.7% on the previous year. The Trustees derive great pleasure from the fact that Castlereagh Fellowship was able to allocate close to £39,000 to Mission & Advocacy, and a further £5,300 for Relief Projects and over 10,000 in respect of the aforementioned Special Collections. Together with spending on missionary-orientated Literature of over £2,300, this adds up to £56,370 or 46% of the Fellowship's overall expenditure. Whilst this is down on last year, we have committed to releasing a further total of £11,500 in April-May (see later), which would take the proportion to a more comparable 50%. This is again a testament to members' concern to both disseminate the Christian Gospel and help alleviate material suffering in our world.

Castlereagh Fellowship's ran an overall deficit for the 2023-2024 financial year of £2,418. There was a deficit in Restricted Funds of £233 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 £2,185 in Unrestricted Funds, and the combined deficit of £2,418 was financed by running down the Fellowship's bank reserves by this amount, meaning that our bank balance now stands at £67,777. The Fellowship is now due a Gift Aid Rebate of £16,180. Thus we continue to occupy a very healthy financial position. Over the course of the incoming year, we expect to further 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 £403,000, with £300,000 of this constituting our estimate of the current value of our premises.

Castlereagh Fellowship possesses current liabilities of £11,500, this consisting of pledged gifts to Claremorris Christian Fellowship's building fund (£10,000), and to humanitarian relief in Lebanon (£1,500).

Castlereagh Fellowship has no other debts.

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 law-abiding and morally responsible lives.
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 consisted of a variety of formats such as mission reports, sharing evenings, and specialist teaching. We invited members of the public and saw some of the local population attend when considering a topical issue like mental health. 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 15 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 has continued to prove very popular with the local community.

Castlereagh Fellowship women's Explorers' discipleship class, involving ten-plus women, meets on alternate Tuesday mornings to study the Bible in a conversational manner. In addition, Castlereagh Fellowship's Ladies' Fellowship Group has met on the first Friday of each month, with numbers rising to the high teens in recent months. Castlereagh Fellowship's Men's Work has staged a number of outreach events which are generally well-attended by visitors. A "3:Sixteen" Youth Group has a very committed group of leaders who invest heavily in the small number of those who attend each monthly activity.

During the past year, Castlereagh Fellowship has offered two Pilates classes for members of the public, and this has led to a few women attending other church events like the Christmas Carol Service or Afternoon Tea.

One aspect of Castlereagh Fellowship that has continued to flourish is our Literature Ministry. A new booklet, "Reasons for Hope" has been published, while other booklets have been distributed to our immediate locality and several overseas destinations. We have also engaged in a number of literature drops in the surrounding geographical area, distributing around 5,000 booklets at a time.

Regarding the prevention/relief of poverty, Castlereagh Fellowship gave over £15,000 in humanitarian aid, including work with refugees in Greece, disabled folks in Mozambique, economic hardship in Ukraine, the leprosy mission in Nepal and assistance for persecuted Christians in general. We were also able to provide funds towards a replacement vehicle for Christian pastors in both Serbia and Bosnia. These gifts were funded by a combination of special church collections, individual directed gifts and regular donations to our Relief Fund. We also provided a gift of £10,000, from our mission funds to help equip a new pulmonary unit at Bach Christian Hospital in northern Pakistan, and a further £5,000 gift to a Christian couple who work with Tamil refugees in Germany.

Locally, members of Castlereagh Fellowship were involved in the distribution of Christmas gifts to the families of incarcerated persons across the religious divide through the Prison Fellowship.

Regarding the advancement of education, Castlereagh Fellowship's weekly Junior and Senior Bible classes and Kids' Club contribute to literacy. Castlereagh Fellowship helped deliver the Baptist Union's Amazing Journey to a local primary school (which contributes to the Religious Studies element of the primary school curriculum). Castlereagh Fellowship also gave financial support to the work of Bible Educational Services and to the Opal Trust.

- OUTCOMES

Regarding the advancement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ among the general public, our services have been well attended, with numbers of regular attendees definitely rising in the past year. All but one of our previous attendees has resumed attendance post-Covid. It is pleasing to observe that the number of subscribers to our website has swollen to over 250, whilst we have a similar number of followers on Facebook. 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 letters of acknowledgement and

appreciation. Castlereagh Fellowship now supports 14 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 gave a one-off gift of £10,000 (Bach Christian Hospital) and two of £5,000 (refugee work in Germany and Opal Trust) in special projects in the past year. A commitment to world mission is part of the DNA of Castlereagh Fellowship. Indeed, as already mentioned, Castlereagh Fellowship spent over £38,000 in the support of mission and advocacy alone 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. We have sought to be responsible with regards to car parking and paid for the re-painting of car parking lines at the local solicitors' car park (which is kindly loaned to Castlereagh Fellowship for use on a Sunday and Wednesday evening).

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, whilst there is a limit to how much we can reasonably be expected to deliver, Castlereagh Fellowship has made a meaningful contribution to children's education through its weekly Junior and Senior Bible classes, Adventurers Bible Club, and some financial giving.

- 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 the regular practice for expressions of care and love to be made at times of ill health or bereavement, plus at special times of the year such as Christmas and Easter.

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 maintained 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. In November 2023 we held a special day of training for all those leaders involved with teaching or supervising children, whilst in March 2024 we held a special meeting between leaders of our "3:Sixteen" Youth Work and our insurance broker to ensure legal compliance and good practice is observed with respect to Consent Forms for outings etc. We are also engaged in updating our practice regarding Risk Assessments for both normal and special activities.

It is very pleasing to report that Castlereagh Fellowship's implementation of a more formalised membership has been completed whilst preserving the essential unity of the organisation.

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, personal details are kept secure and 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 essential to 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

1.9.24

SIGNED:

N. McIlrath

Patricia Kelly

M.M. Chesney

Angela