

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (2023)

St Comgall's (Church of Ireland) Parish, Rathcoole, Newtownabbey

(NIC 103260, registered 14/09/15)

ADDRESS Coolderry Gardens, Rathcoole, Newtownabbey, BT37 9QH

MAIN CONTACT DETAILS - Revd Brian Lacey (Chair)

St. Peter's Rectory, 17 Waterloo Park, North Belfast BT15 5HX

TRUSTEES: Revd Brian Lacey, Mrs Margaret Long, Mr Robert Long, Mr Alan Jones, Mrs Anne Welsh, Mr William Glendinning, Mrs Kerry Whyte Fitzpatrick, Mr Tom Nelson, Ms Sandra Sprott, Mrs Denise Gilmore, Mr James McFarlane, Mr Michael Fell, Mrs Elizabeth Gartley, Mrs Laura Pierce.

FINANCES:

The Finances of St Comgall's Parish are managed by the Honorary Treasurer who reports back to the Trustees at Select Vestry meetings, held usually on the second Wednesday evening of each month, or in-between as necessary, and minutes are captured by the Hon Secretary. Select Vestry members are elected each year at the Annual Easter General Vestry. Public notice is given of this meeting in advance. The Rector (acting as Chair of the Trustees) can appoint two individuals/Trustees to the Select Vestry to act as his/her (Rector's) Churchwarden and Glebe warden.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

The parish income comes mainly from Free Will Offering (FWO) and open plate collection. The parish also relies on benefit from Gift Aid; and receives donations from organisations, anonymous donors, in memoriam gifts, etc. Special envelope collections are made to benefit charities throughout the year, and all donations are allocated by committee. Individual financial support through FWO contributions increased slightly on the previous accounting year. This is largely a reflection of an aging and generous church membership, and a return to normal collection of FWO resuming over time following the lifting of Covid restrictions on the previous years. The parish are to be praised for continued charitable giving; and for maintaining good stewardship of resources without major grant aid, especially in the face of covid. Expenditure includes payment of visiting clergy costs and caretaker's wages; contributions to central Denominational funds; general running costs (eg electric, gas, lift service); repairs and maintenance. The residential rectory property continues to be a means of external income (through a rolling tenancy agreement) which has proved to be a wise and prudent decision and is responsible for moving the overall finances in a more positive direction, ensuring the parish is a going concern, and resulting in a position of credit at £24,897.06 at year end. The end of year position was positively impacted due to the ongoing vacancy.

The existing tenant has been resident in the Rectory since August 2021. All repairs are carried out as promptly as possible, as befits good practice, and to ensure tenant satisfaction and ongoing rental.

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The rent was secured at a monthly rate of £900.00. This value attractively compares to those for similar properties in the area, and after deduction of 8% property management fees payable to UPS estate agents at £72 plus VAT of £14.40, leaves the parish with a new net monthly income of £813.60. A proportional amount of this monthly income goes towards the payment of rates for the property normally £728.27pa. An additional backdated payment for the sum of £3451.54 for Rates due to ineligibility for Rates relief during the years 2019 to 2023. Ground rent at £50.00pa. The total income from rectory rent for the property by the end of 2023 was £9,763.20.

PROPERTY

St Comgall's church is an historic asset. It was previously listed as category B on the NI Buildings Database (ID 6524 - HB21/20/001) as a building of special architectural interest in Bradan ward, Newtownabbey as part of a thematic survey of 20th century. In September 2017 the property was fully de-listed as it is no longer deemed a good enough example of modern design because of some internal changes, although it remains a building of interest above the common building stock. The Trustees and Caretaker continue to maintain it to the highest standard possible; and in their deliberations regarding modification of the building take into account the advice, regulations and specific requirements of the Department for Communities (NI) Historic Buildings Council. Permissions are sought as necessary regarding any remedial works requiring special attention from Connor Glebes & Architectural Committee, Diocesan Council and Representative Church Body (RCB) Property & Executive Committees, as prescribed (<http://connor.anglican.org/support/building-and-property/>).

The Building & Development account is used for refurbishment, repairs, painting and upkeep of parish property and rectory, and as a reserve for unexpected repairs and future building projects. By year end Dec 2023 the Building account held £27,961.59. A further sub account is ear-marked for the 'Shaping our Future' insulation/refurbishment project and has a year-end balance of £60,836.86.

The parish receives interest from two longstanding bequests held by RCB and Diocesan offices (Dunlop £4.52 and the REA £142.36) which is used to benefit rectory maintenance. The parish receives interest from The RCB Glebe Profit of £94.30. These are all made public in the printed annual audited accounts. The total combined figure received for the 2023 totalled £241.18.

In this accounting period, the charge for hall bookings was maintained at the very reasonable and competitive rate of £40/2hr in order to facilitate and indeed actively encourage access to the church/hall facilities for members of a community which statistically shows high levels of unemployment and/or low income.

FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

St Comgall's had applied for funding from the Department for Communities (Community Halls Fund) in Dec 2016, but this grant aid was oversubscribed and affected by the wider NI political situation. At the date of this report, the application still remains active, pending consideration in the next round of awards, whenever (and indeed if) that may occur.

A grant was applied for and successfully obtained by Antrim and Newtownabbey Council. £1,000 was received to celebrate the Kings Coronation. A special service of thanksgiving was held, light

refreshments were provided after the service and all attendees received a special badge to commemorate the event.

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In December 2023, St. Comgall's received a grant of £500 towards a Seniors Christmas event. The event was held on Saturday 16th December, with over 30 attendees, we provided afternoon tea and fun festivities included a table quiz and carol singing. A fun afternoon of friendship and fellowship was enjoyed by all in attendance

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT:

St Comgall's, Rathcoole is a parish of the Church of Ireland and as such adheres to the Constitution of the Church of Ireland (1988) available for consultation online at <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/about/the-constitution/the-constitution-in-full> Other Codes of Good Practice adopted by the Charity include Col Safeguarding Trust for Ministry with Children (2007) available online at: <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/parishresources/317/safeguarding-trust-northern-ireland-full>. Training relating to Section 1.6 Vulnerable adults was accessed in 2015 by Trustees serving as a ST Panel for the parish and updated training on all Safeguarding, and the Inclusion of Offenders in Public Worship was undertaken in 2019.

(<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/news/5835/vulnerable-adultsawareness-training>) Updates to Safeguarding training for all volunteers was cancelled in 2020 due to Covid19 lockdowns. Some sessions were held via Zoom but many of our leaders do not have access to this mode of communication. We hope to hold in person training for all organisation leaders as soon as this is possible under covid restrictions. A further Code in relation to Dignity in Church Life (2015) was adopted by the Parish in Dec 2016 and is available online at :

<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/resources/333/dignity-inchurch-life-charter> (All links valid as viewed Oct 1st 2018). Guidelines for Equality, and Financial Management & Good Practice were also adopted at the same meeting.

In 2018 representatives from both the Select and General Vestry attended Fire & Safety Training organised by St Comgall's Parish and a comprehensive Risk Assessment of the premises was carried out.

GDPR records continue to be maintained and updated as per the Col policies. See <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/resources/501/general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr>

Covid policies and protocols produced by Church of Ireland were adapted to the local parish situation and risk assessments were carried out on both church and halls. All these were adopted by the Select Vestry in 2020. These continued to be updated, amended and implemented for all services and activities (both indoors and outdoors) as guidelines changed. See <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/resources/654/covid19-guidance-forparishes>

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PURPOSES:

1) The main purpose of St Comgall's parish is the advancement of the Christian religion through engagement with the general public, and in particular with the disadvantaged, the sick, the elderly and the young. This can be measured and evidenced through increased social integration and pastoral care delivered at the point of need.

2) The parish also seeks to advance the Christian religion through the public enjoyment of cultural and historic buildings and artefacts (such as church plate, furnishings and archival records) as well as encouraging an overall improved appreciation of longstanding Christian heritage. This is achieved through education in relation to Bible, theology, church history and culture; through regular maintenance & upkeep of all parish property; through the conservation of important artefacts; and through the safe-keeping and provision (on request) of copies of archival documents for personal research, legal, and genealogical purposes. Public access is facilitated outside normal service times & parish organizations' normal operation hours through consideration by the Select Vestry/Trustees of continual requests for the use of our facilities and resources by individuals, community groups and members of the wider society (eg for public meetings, social celebrations).

NON MALFEASANCE

There is no harm arising directly from any of these general purposes. Any harm potentially flowing from the various parish activities is pre-empted as much as possible and mitigated by the adoption of good practice guidelines and the provision of relevant training (eg first aid, food & hygiene, and health and safety training); by the introduction of accident/emergency incident reporting procedures; through the invitation of topical speakers to different organisation meetings; by regular routine maintenance and inspections of all property, equipment and resources; and by holding regular fire & other risk assessments, and practising emergency evacuation drill procedures.

Charges are set at a denominational level for archival searches and the provision of certified copies of any records. Additionally, on occasions, the engagement of professional staff, and services are essential in providing security and public access, but these are incidental to the fulfilment of the purpose.

BENEFICIARIES

The beneficiaries of St Comgall's are the general public, primarily (but not restricted to) those living in the Greater Newtownabbey and Rathcoole parish areas. Being open to, educating, and engaging with society as a whole, and offering support for those needing help is fundamental to the practical delivery of the tenets of Christianity. The wider benefit to the public will outweigh any detriment arising in the course of Christian outreach. The parish does not function for the private benefit of individuals except if incidental to its main purposes (eg a speaker invited to an individual organisation may have benefitted by the sale of his/her work, or this could have resulted in an increased profile for them). No Trustee receives remuneration, reward or other private benefit for carrying out their responsibility in relation to the main purpose of the parish ie the advancement of the Christian religion. No personal private benefit is received either by Trustees fulfilling their responsibilities in respect of access to records, buildings or artefacts, but reasonable fees/donations are received by the Charity itself to cover essential expenses incurred for events in the premises.

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PUBLIC BENEFIT

The benefit of participation in the life and associated activities of the parish includes the enjoyment of public worship; the giving and receiving of pastoral ministry; increased socialization for isolated members of the community; greater physical activity and community cohesion (Community Bowling Club; BB; Girl Guides, Brownies & Rainbows); improved educational outcomes (individual schools projects/surveys, invited guest speakers); better understanding of the values relating to civic engagement (ROC Befriending Scheme; Christmas Fair); access to specialist support groups, and the facilitated networking and working together of diverse groups using the premises

Delivery of any material (parish magazines, service sheets, essential resources, children's activity packs) The delivery of Church magazines was supported by a small dedicated group of individuals.

Artificial flower arrangements were purchased for use in the church sanctuary in 2021.

IMPACT / EVALUATION OF BENEFIT

The public evaluation of these benefits has been achieved through annual Diocesan statistical return surveys, including an analysis of attendance at public worship and organisational membership trends. Information gathered by these means was additionally supplemented by soft data gathered through 1-1 conversations. By year end (2023) membership of St Comgall's was represented by 186 households (corresponding to 391 individuals); and had an average weekly attendance at Sunday morning services of 44 individuals. This attendance figure is reflective of an aging congregation, but also reflects the commitment of members to continue 'normal' activities when possible.

Ad hoc anecdotal feedback and post-event comments received from members of the public following their personal experience of receiving the ministries of St Comgall's have always been extremely positive (eg following family baptisms, weddings and funerals; or after social gatherings and uniformed organization events) Direct appreciation is regularly given to parish visitors and clergy in relation to pastoral care offered to their family relations, (or the individual themselves) whilst in hospitals, private nursing homes, at the point of emergency or crisis, whilst recuperating, or long term housebound at home.

Funerals and ministry to the bereaved

Funerals remained consistent in 2023.

Numbers attending the in-person service for Lost Loved ones remained consistent. The reading of the memorial lists, the interactive symbolism, the opportunity for silence, the use of both secular and sacred music, and the reflective nature of this service was appreciated by all in attendance.

Provision of worship (in person and online) and the use of social media platforms

A special service was held to celebrate the Kings' coronation, all attendees were provided with a badge as a keepsake to mark the occasion. A light lunch was provided after the service. The service was attended by 56 individuals.

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Christmas morning worship was attended by 27 individuals. A evening Carol service was also held and was attended by 26 individuals.

The use of social media, in the form of the parish Facebook page, became the central way of disseminating information to church members and the wider public alike. Many posts were known to have been 'shared on' to an even wider audience. Posts included motivational and inspirational quotations, fun memes, prayers and Scriptures as well as updates on covid lockdowns, testing & self care information, and any changes to restriction guidelines or school opening. The linked use of Messenger established in previous years facilitated easy and non-threatening direct communication with the general public and many queries, concerns and personal prayer requests were received by this means.

OBLIGATIONS & ACCOUNTABILITY

In setting the objectives and in planning all activities for the year the Trustees of St Comgall's Parish have had due regard to the Commission's public benefit statutory guidance and reporting requirements set out in regulations 32-34 of the accounting and reporting regulations and issued by the Commission under section 4(b) of the Charities Act.

OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES/ACHIEVEMENTS (Section 32 (2) (b))

Kidz Church

This organisation met most Sundays between January & June, and September to December with 12 children enrolled. There continues to be 2 adult members who lead the weekly activities.

Bowling Club

The Bowling Club met weekly throughout the year with 10 members attending regularly. Whilst competitive matches did not resume, the club did manage to hold several friendly matches.

11th Newtownabbey Company Boys' Brigade

Company meetings took place on a weekly basis throughout the year. There were 3 Leaders and average of 8 boys in attendance throughout the year. Boys enjoyed a visit from "Wee Crawlies" and a trip out 10 pin bowling.

127th Belfast company, Guides, Brownies and Rainbow Guides

All sections met weekly throughout the year. All sections enjoyed celebrations for the Kings Coronation.