

**Church of the Ascension, Cloughfern Parish**  
126 Doagh Road, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim BT37 9QR  
(Charity No: NIC103261)

**Trustees' Annual Report Year Ended 31st December 2023**

**Trustees**

Between 1st January and 31st December 2023, the following held a position of Trustee:

Rev Tim Close (Chair), Jennifer Boyd, Clare Campbell, Joanne Dickenson, David Garland, Sandra Harvey, Christine Hunter, Billy Ingram, Tanya Kay, Kerry McIlwaine, Alan McNiece, Karyn McNiece, Elizabeth McWatters, Irene Orr, Caroline Tares, Barbara Turkington and Gillian Webb.

**Objectives and Activities**

The principal objective of the Church of the Ascension, Cloughfern Parish, is to support the advancement of the Christian faith by promoting, through its work, the whole mission of the church – pastoral, evangelical, social and ecumenical. Fundamental to the practical delivery of Christianity is being open to, and engaging with, society as a whole and offering support to those who need it.

Cloughfern Parish has custody of property and records pertaining to cultural and religious heritage, maintenance of which is undertaken by the Select Vestry of the church.

**Achievements, Performance and Public Benefit**

Church services, youth organisations, clubs, groups and social meetings have all resumed, and meeting normally – but we continue to be vigilant.

We reach out to our housebound parishioners through home visits by clergy and other volunteers, who also provide transport to church services or social events. Information and support is also available via telephone, our parish website, and our Facebook page.

With the aid of a grant from Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, we hosted a party in May 2023 to celebrate the King's Coronation. This event was open to all in the community and was well attended. Everyone joined in the fun and games – as the saying goes 'the craic was mighty!'

Even though the financial squeeze is making life difficult, our parishioners continued to provide the financial support to allow us to donate to international charities such as the Samaritans' Purse, as well as charities specifically for Libya (the Bishop's Appeal for Libya and the Disasters Emergency Committee). We also supported local charities by donating to the Royal British Legion, SHINE, AWARE NI, NI Hospice, SENAC, and Alzheimers NI. We continue to give ongoing support our local foodbank, both with food items and monetary donations.

Our Charity Shop opens two days a week, and continues to be very popular and well supported both by parishioners and the wider community. It has been able to make charitable donations to: Pancreatic Cancer, Cancer Research, St. Anne's Cathedral (including the Black Santa Sit-out), NI Hospice and Alzheimer's NI, as well as providing a vital source of funds for our Church.

During the year, our coffee morning supported the Disasters Emergency Committee, and Macmillan Cancer Care.

## Financial Review

The Parish began the year with a balance from 2022 for Cash in Hand and Bank of £30,721.80. Total Receipts for 2023 came to £82,397.19, which was down by £4,780.17 on previous year. This was due to a reduction in donations probably as a result of the financial pressures on households.

Total Resources Expended came to £100,256.73, a significant increase of £6364.83 on the figure for 2022. This was mainly due to the cost of electricity and gas for heating which doubled; also replacing lights outside Church Halls (£4519.20). We have made small savings where we could e.g.: general grounds maintenance, without affecting the overall Health and Safety of users of the Church and Halls.

At the end of 2023 the balance for Cash in Hand and at the Bank was £12901.72.

## Pay and Remuneration

On the Schedule of Approved Stipends set by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, Minimum Approved Stipend for 2023 is £33,900.00 per annum. Our Priest-in-Charge was appointed on the understanding that he would work 5 days instead of the usual 6, and would therefore be paid pro-rata. General Synod also give a guide value for Expenses of Office Allowance of £925.00 per annum and locomotory allowances of £7000 per annum. The Parish contribution to the 'Clergy Defined Contribution Pension Scheme' (including the "Per Cure" element of £4407.00) was £7797.00 for the year 2023.

## Management

Members of the Select Vestry (who are also the Charity Trustees) are elected annually at the Easter General Vestry. They are responsible for the day-to-day management of the parish, and for deciding on matters of general concern and importance, including how parish funds are to be applied. The finances are managed by the Honorary Treasurer, who reports to the Select Vestry at monthly meetings. Special meetings can be convened between scheduled dates, if necessary. Records of meetings are kept by the Honorary Secretary.

## Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records that show and explain the Parish's transactions, and disclose, with reasonable accuracy, at any time, the assets and liabilities of the Parish. They are also responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report, together with the Statement of Receipts and Payments, and Statement of Assets and Liabilities, in accordance with applicable law and regulations. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Parish, and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

Trustee 1:

Barbara Tolington

Trustee 2:

Christine Hunter

Date: \_\_\_\_\_