

KNOCKBRACKEN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.
TRUSTEE REPORT 2023.

Administrative Details.

Charity Name: Knockbracken Congregational Church.

Registered Charity Number: 00640945

Address: Ballymaconaghy Road, Belfast, BT8 6SB

Telephone: 02890792667

Website: www.knockbrackenccl.co.uk

Trustees: The EFCC Trust Corporation Ltd. PO Box 34, BEVERLEY, East Yorkshire, England HU17 0YY

Governing Document: Church Constitution

Public Benefit Statement.

The church's charitable objectives are primarily focused on the advancement of religion, which is recognised as a charitable purpose having public benefit. The public benefit that flows from this is the adoption and maintenance of a moral framework which encourages people to be good citizens.

The provision of this benefit is evidenced by:

- The provision of a place of worship open to all sections of the community.
- Facilities for pre-school children for development of social and educational skills.
An incidental benefit from this is that it provides parents/minders of the attendees with a gathering in which they can share advice and learnings,
- Facilities for people to engage in cultural or recreational activities
- Varied programme of activities both social and religious for women in the Knockbracken/Four Winds area of south east Belfast
- Activities both religious and social for men within both the immediate fellowship and outside.
- Interaction with an accredited counsellor to provide training to other qualified counsellors who wish to work with children and young people across the community who require support.
- Provision of office space for We are Made for More, an organisation that works with the Dept of Education to deliver healthy living workshops to schools.

All activities of the church are provided free of charge and are open to all sections of the community as defined by the Equality Commission.

Activities Report.

We are an independent self-governing church, a member of the Union of Congregational Churches in Ireland and affiliated to the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches (EFCC) in the U.K. As a fellowship with a sphere of influence with those living in the Newtownbreda, Four Winds and surrounding areas of south Belfast we seek to proclaim and advance the Christian faith as set out in the Bible, which we believe to be the inerrant Word of God.

The fellowship has approximately 25 families connected to it with a regular attendance of c25 -30 for worship on Sunday mornings and c20 in the evening.

The church has a varied programme of activities. Our primary focus is to meet for corporate worship and Bible teaching each Sunday when our pastor faithfully proclaims the gospel and believer's faith is strengthened and encouraged. As reported previously the Sunday School has

remained been suspended due to the lack of young children in the fellowship however it is our prayer that in the future we will be able to re-open it. Continuing discussions are taking place with Made for More, an organisation who have expertise in working with children, in order to explore ideas on how we could recommence a work with young people in the community and we plan with their help to perhaps hold some sort of summer scheme for children in 2024.

Our regular Sunday worship services were supplemented with a the midweek Bible Study and Prayer Meeting when each Wednesday our pastor taught from God's word. Our minister regularly visits members of the fellowship who are sick or confined to home or residential care. As a fellowship we have continued with our WhatsApp group which affords members an additional opportunity to keep in contact and to share concerns, scripture verses or songs which have encouraged them in times of difficulty. The church has continued to stream our services each Sunday morning and evening and these are available for anyone to watch online.

Our weekly drop-in coffee morning (Open House), was held each Thursday. This is open to everyone in our community and members of the church. Signs are set out each Thursday inviting people passing by to come in and have a cup of tea or coffee and something to eat whilst having a chat. All the facilities are provided free of charge and are aimed at raising the profile of the fellowship in the area and providing a space where, perhaps, those who are lonely or requiring friendship can come and feel welcome.

During the course of 2023, we suspended the Open House drop in facility in order that, as a church, we could facilitate the running of a course for Hong Kongers who were granted the opportunity by the Government to move from Hong Kong to relocate in the UK. The course was designed to help them settle in to their new communities and as well as teaching them something about the country, its language and culture, it also offered advice on where to go to obtain support regarding schooling, GP services etc.

As a church, we continue to offer an area of our building to an organisation called Made for More which seeks to inspire young people in their communities and schools to educate them with the knowledge required to value who they are and helps them to make positive decisions for a more purposeful future. This group is supported by the Department for Education to run workshops and deliver talks to school children in order to promote healthier living and greater self esteem whilst also supporting young people who are maybe struggling with mental health issues. They also run these workshops with various youth organisations. Having outgrown their previous base, the use of our property has allowed Made for More to expand their activities and this will provide undoubted benefits for young people throughout N Ireland. A member of our fellowship who is an accredited BACP counsellor has been able to offer support to Made for More in their work.

The church, during the year, also allowed the use of its premises to support and facilitate other community activities. One night a week an Irish Dancing class is held for children in the area who wish to attend. In addition we have also permitted the use of the premises to an organisation called Jo Jingles. The class is part of a national network of over 700 centres and offers established, structured fun and learning for babies and pre-school children from the local area.

During the summer of 2023, the church also held two free BBQ evenings and invitations to these events were not just confined to church members, but were also offered to people from the local area.

Two, six week "Spin Classes" were held by the church during the year for those keen on cycling or wishing to improve their fitness. These classes were open to anyone from the local community to attend, and indeed some of the Hong Kong people mentioned earlier, came along.

Our pastor Rev Coulter, during the year, continued to serve on the National Committee of the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches. In this role he is helping to guide and direct other churches throughout the United Kingdom that are members of this grouping.

Throughout the year the church has continued to support the work of Storehouse Belfast (a registered charity) who provide social care to local families who are in need. The issue of food poverty continues to be a major focus for Storehouse so members of our fellowship collect non-perishable foodstuffs on a regular basis. In addition, at our Harvest service all the foodstuffs brought by members to that service were donated to Storehouse. On a regular basis, the food that has been donated is delivered by one of our church members to the Storehouse depot for onward distribution to people needing support.

The fellowship's financial needs continue to be funded by freewill voluntary contributions from members and adherents with the main outlay being salaries for the pastor and a part time cleaner. The balance of the loan account taken to pay for the building of a church hall is funded by additional contributions from the members and is augmented by occasional small gifts and Gift Aid relief from HMRC.

During the year the members contribute to missionary causes. On a regular basis our midweek meeting will have a talk from a Missionary Society and an opportunity is provided to our members to contribute to the work of that society. In particular the church continues to provide monthly support to David and Rosemary Edwards who are National Directors of Child Evangelism Fellowship in Ireland.

As in previous years at Christmas time, the church, this time under the coordination of our Ladies Fellowship, collected essential hygiene items, small toys, gloves, scarves etc. and filled shoeboxes with them and these were delivered to Blythswood Care, a charity with a mission to provide both practical and spiritual support to those in need at home and abroad.. Blythswood coordinate this annual "Shoebox Appeal" and they distribute the boxes to needy children in Eastern Europe.

During the year the church continued operate a Mothers and Toddlers Group. This attracts upwards of 20 children with their parents or carers. It is open to the entire community and affords an opportunity for people to come with their children, allowing social interaction for the kids and a chance for their carers to have some refreshments and socialise with others.

During 2023 the church again granted the use of its hall to a nationally accredited counsellor to run approved courses for other qualified counsellors who want to be better quipped to support people in the community who find themselves in a situation where they may require help.

Each activity mentioned in this report covering from the youngest to the eldest is open to the entire population of the Four Winds/Newtownbreda area and beyond. However the church's priority remains unchanged, namely preaching the good news of Jesus Christ, the biblical message of personal salvation and living a God-directed life.

Signed for and on behalf of the trustees of Knockbracken Congregational Church:

Ian Mewha