

Charity Registration Number	NIC103558
Charity Address	St John's Church Office 3 Doagh Road, BT39 9BG
Trustees	Mr Andrew Brannigan, Dr Christine Burns, The Rev. Jonathan Campbell-Smyth, Mr Paul Comins, Mr Colin Ferguson, Mrs Trina Grant, Professor George Heaney, Mrs Shelly Jess, Dr David McIlhagger, Mrs Lorraine Ogilby, Mr Michael Ogilby Mr Mark Patterson, Miss Margaret Scott, Mr Lawrence Stanford, Mr Adrian Taylor, Dr Peter Watson, Mr David Wilson, Mrs Francis Wilson
Independent Examiner	Hopper & Company Ballyclare
Bank	Danske Bank, Ballyclare

PURPOSE

The Trustees present the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2022.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The charitable purpose of the Church of Ireland is the advancement of religion. The principal function of the United Parish of Ballynure and Ballyeaston (Ballyclare) (hereafter referred to as The United Parish) is to support the advancement of the Christian religion by promoting, through the work of The United Parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social, and ecumenical. Being open to and engaging with society as a whole and offering support for those needing help are fundamental to the practical delivery of the benefits of Christianity. As a result of activity in the pursuit of the advancement of the Christian religion, The United Parish has custody of property and of records, materials, and artefacts of significance to the cultural and religious heritage and maintenance of which is undertaken by the Select Vestry of The United Parish.

ACHIEVEMENTS, PERFORMANCE AND PUBLIC BENEFIT

CORE VALUES

Our Core Values as a United Parish are :

Christ at the centre of all we do

The importance of God's Spirit-filled Word in how it shapes how we live

A community Church with a Pastoral Heart

A community Church that seeks for all to have a deeper relationship with God

A community Church that speaks into and shapes a new generation

A community Church that reaches out in love and welcomes everyone in

A community Church that partners with others in the Gospel

Pastoring

Deepening

Shaping

Reaching

Partnering

Our values as a church determine how we serve God in our community. Our values keep reminding us of how we should use our resources and where to use them for His glory. These become the litmus test to keep reminding us why we exist.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction

This address is always a rather strange one, because it is neither a sermon nor is it a state of the nation address. Therefore I want to reflect on the past year and think a little about the year ahead. Thankfully the memories of COVID and the long periods without church activities are now a thing of the past, and in this past year we have been able to resume our ministries again.

I wonder do any of you remember my document called RESET that I issued to all households earlier in 2022. In it I talked about rebuilding our church family after the pandemic, but not to simply put all the same bricks back where they previously were. It was not a time to simply carry on regardless. It was and is a time for new things. If we have learnt anything I think it is that the church should avoid the busyness of the programmes, or just sliding through the church calendar without considering what is God doing in us for this time and in this place. Instead in my document I said that we must be committed to the worship and devotion of our sovereign Lord God who alone is worthy of all our praise. This would be a time for building spiritual disciplines and protecting ourselves from the deceit and assaults of the enemy. And then from that place of worship and spiritual discipline, we then have a greater desire to serve the Lord in the local church.

This all sits of course within the context of our core values which remain so important to us - where we are rooted to the unchanging Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, where his word becomes our moral and spiritual compass, where we recognise the importance of pastoral care to all, where we desire to grow more deeply in our

relationship with God, where we desire to invest in family life shaping a new generation of young believers, where we seek to reach out in love and offer hospitality to those already in the church family but also the many outside our church, and finally to establish partnerships with organisations that serve God locally and internationally. Those are our core values that underpin everything.

And so as I look at this past year I am so thankful to God at how these aspects of resetting and refocusing have been awakened in people's lives, and I honestly believe through that RESET there has been less of a frantic running around as seen in previous years.

I'm not going to take away from the various reports that will be presented this evening, but here are just a few of the highlights that I have been encouraged by in this last year.

Highlights

Firstly, our small groups are a vitally important aspect to the growth of everyone within our church family. It is simply impossible for anyone to grow spiritually through Sunday worship alone. The scriptures outline how the early church regularly came together in people's homes, and through this they were encouraged in their walk with the Lord. In the United Parish we are simply following this model. And so it is a delight that we now have 7 groups meeting regularly. I'd like to personally thank both Laura Galloway and Hugh & Olive Spence for stepping forward into leadership.

Secondly, in this past year we have seen an incredible spiritual growth in our young people through the discipleship programmes led by Tim & Leah Burns. The Burns family offer their home each weekend to our young people and through it they have grown deeper as a group and also it has stirred their hearts towards serving the Lord. Thank you Tim & Leah. It is through this work that I am now receiving the benefits of being able to shape and nurture many of these young people as we prepare for the Youth Mission to Tarragona, Spain in July. As a plug, please come along on Saturday to the Coffee Morning in St John's halls to help with fundraising.

Next, we are delighted to see many new families join St John's Church and we therefore pray that they would know the love and welcome of the United Parish. Within that group of new families, it is such a delight to now have Ken Chiaji commissioned as a Parish Reader which permits him to lead services in the future. Ken is about to receive further induction on this and hopefully in the very near future you will see him regularly involved in morning worship.

Next, if you have been in St John's you will notice that our worship is led once a month by our young people. This has encouraged so many of us within the congregation, and it is so good to see them using their giftings to lift high the name of Jesus. I would like to thank both Adrian Taylor and Neil Smyth who have been working with the young people in their practices.

Similarly in Christ Church we are delighted that both Jenny Cobain and Andrew Flanagan have supported us in weekly worship. As Jenny goes off soon for maternity leave, we give thanks for her and pray God's blessing on her, Gordie and Alfie as they await the arrival of baby Cobain.

Next, our prayer life within the church has been such an important backbone to our success, and therefore it has been so uplifting to see Leigh Henderson providing another avenue for prayer through the monthly Prayer Warriors leaflet. I know that for folks who are housebound, this has allowed them to feel very much active in the life of the church, raising their petitions before God, united in purpose. Thank you Leigh for facilitating this opportunity so people can pray daily for our parish.

Our men's ministry has also restarted, and we hope that through this monthly gathering, men will receive encouragement from one another in fellowship. It is my hope that through this, opportunities for evangelism to others and spiritual growth will be encouraged.

It was also good at the beginning of 2023 for Alpha to be hosted in St John's over 11 weeks. Alpha offers people who wish to explore the Christian faith an opportunity to hear more and discuss issues in a friendly and non-threatening environment. I'd like to thank the team that facilitated this each Sunday evening, namely Hugh, Sandra, Jill and the team of caterers who ensured our guests were fed.

Finally, there has been the steady increase of need for our compassion ministries. Through this we have established good relationships with people, and also community representatives. We've seen more baby basics referrals, more need for food on Mondays, the need for school uniforms due to the costs of clothes, and opportunities for one-to-one advice to those attending our CAP programme. The team is simply too large to name but thank you for how you demonstrate the Gospel with feet walking into our community.

Thanks

Can you see from these examples, how the focus of our work is very much about the spiritual growth of individuals and a desire to reach out with the Gospel. I'd therefore like to take this opportunity again to thank all of those involved in different ways and in the many other ways that people serve, whether at Sunday worship, or through organisations that meet during the week. I feel a real sense that many of you have committed yourselves to a refocus, a repurpose and a reset towards placing Christ as the main reason why we exist as Church.

Focus into the next year

So if that has been our focus in this past year, then what will it look like in the year ahead?

I hope it's not a big surprise if I tell you that it should be the same again. And the reason for that is, whilst we see positive signs of spiritual refocus and growth within some members, I am very conscious that in others I don't know whether anything has changed? So my prayer and hope is that more will come into that living relationship with the Lord Jesus that means everything in their life is put to one side because Jesus now dominates everything.

So with more of the same Resetting, here are my reasons and concerns :

Firstly, whilst many have returned to regular church worship there are many that have not, or some have settled into a pattern of coming once a month. You see life now gives people so much more opportunities at the weekends, and life also places so much pressure through the week with work that the weekend becomes a time to chill and relax. And so more and more people push God out further. But many need to be reminded that we are made by God with one purpose and that is to worship him in all we do. Therefore if people are not placing worship at the centre of their lives through gathering together, then you can bet your bottom dollar something else will begin to replace that pattern. That's what happened to the people of Israel as they waited for Moses to return from the mountain - they found something else to worship. Some people place more emphasis on their work, some place more emphasis on their leisure, some place more emphasis on their family. Whilst these are all good things, we must be reminded that Jesus instructed that if we are his disciples we have to leave everything and follow him. Let's make sure we know where our priorities need to be. Like the writer to the Hebrews we must not neglect from gathering together as some are in the custom of doing. (Hebrews 10).

Many of us will know of people who used to gather in church, they may even be people within our families. Let us consider prayerfully how we can stir them into returning, and let us consider how we too need to make a greater commitment in our devotion of the Lord.

Secondly, for those that serve in any capacity within the church, I would challenge you as to how you are able to serve and at the same time not make a commitment to weekly bible study with others? In order that you lead other people in some way whether through music, youth, other organisations, cutting the grass, Vestry whatever it may be, you simply cannot serve the Lord effectively if you do not have time to be fed by him amongst other Christians. Our reason to serve in the church must come from our desire to carry out the mission of God and reach others through the Gospel. It is not simply about volunteering to help out, or to be part of some community organisation. We are the body of Christ. Let's ensure that all of us who lead or volunteer are fed for the task placed on us by God. To give you an example, you would not expect me to stand up in church and preach if you thought I wasn't making time to be fed in God's word both privately and also with others. Because it's through that devotion that I know that my strength comes from the Lord and not my own. So if that's what you expect of me, then God expects it from all of us. If you lead or help in any capacity please consider carefully why you don't gather with others through the week

around God's word. I would rather that you are fed effectively rather than serve on an empty tank.

Thirdly, I am reminded of George Colclough's remarks to me on many occasions where he told me that many years ago, before my time, he and others went out and knocked the doors of every house in Ballynure, telling them of Jesus. For those that know George, that would cause him no concerns whatsoever - no greater a passion for evangelism can there be than George Colclough. But I believe we must regard Ballynure as a mission field, and that's no different than Ballyclare. However whilst I see spiritual growth in St John's, I fear that I am not seeing this to the same extent in Christ Church. Are we doing anything differently in Christ Church than St John's? Well yes. So we must tackle this if we long for growth for the future. You will hear later in the Glebes report of structural work to our buildings that is required following the Quinquennial Inspection. However I believe a spiritual rebuilding needs a greater emphasis for the future.

Note that resolving these issues does not require some clever recovery plan - it needs the power of the Holy Spirit to ignite and energise the members of Christ Church. In effect I pray for revival to break out. It is something that I certainly will give my energy to, but it will not be resolved by a rector alone. Nor do I believe it is right for it to be led by many from St John's. So I challenge our Christ church members to call a meeting with me to begin this journey, seeking God's direction and understanding the mission that we are called to in Ballynure.

The final area that I would like to conclude with is the issue of serving within the body. We will all know that Paul has many teachings on how the body of Christ is to function - he writes to the Corinthians, he writes to the Colossians, to the Ephesians, and also to the church in Rome about it. And in these passages the issue of unity and diversity repeat themselves. Unity & Diversity in the Body. I see these on two plains - one as a diverse group the parts of the body are all doing their job, and then on another plain they are all in unity working for the purpose and will of God the Father. That is the model of how we who serve need to function. We recognise that everyone has a part to play and should be respected for that. And then all of us are united with one purpose under God. Later tonight we will be voting for roles within the church. These roles are not any more important than others. In fact my role is not any more important than others' roles in the church. But it will suffer when we do not consider unity and diversity. So if positions are not filled tonight, or roles that come up from time to time are not filled, then that means the body is not displaying the diversity of giftings that God has allotted to us all. Our giftings in us all must not lie dormant. When David and I reach out to ask for support in ministries and we get no response, then that demonstrates a disunity in the body. Let's therefore consider how we can work with more unity in this year ahead. And as Paul teaches the Ephesians, "Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, ⁸ because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do"

Conclusion

So what an incredibly encouraging year that has brought many blessings to our parish as we have considered refocusing and resetting ourselves back towards God. Yes there may be challenges ahead, but in God's providence as he guides us in our journey of faith, we know that we can do all things placed on us as a church through Christ who gives us the strength. God bless you as you choose to make him Lord of all things in your life.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The Financial Statements of The United Parish of Ballynure & Ballyeaston (Ballyclare), hereafter referred to as The United Parish, were produced by the Honorary Treasurer and the Church Administrator. They have been independently examined.

The documents are openly available to church members to provide assurance that church funds have been, and will continue to be, spent correctly and for the purposes for which they are intended.

The Financial Statements show the Income received by The United Parish which is primarily voluntary giving and Grants. The Income is used to finance all of the expenditure during the year which includes staff costs, repairs and upkeep and the utility bills of the six Parish buildings. It also finances Compassion Ministries and Youth activities.

Whilst the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic was much diminished during the year, disruption was still seen to affect church activities and congregation sizes. Yet through the generosity and faithfulness of our parishioners we were able to maintain our level of 'Voluntary Giving'.

Through the hard work and dedication of members of our church family, The United Parish secured approximately £19,500 in Grants. These were, and will be, used to finance Youth events and our Compassion Ministries.

Under the spiritual direction of our Reverend, we are a church that believes in tithing our income. In the 2022 financial period we remained faithful to this, by way of distributing approximately £15,000 to local and overseas missions and charities.

Whilst The United Parish saw a slight increase on 2021 expenditure on 'Repairs/ Upkeep to our properties, inability to undertake repairs at the height of the pandemic has resulted in a large backlog of work which will require substantial funding. This workload has been noted in the Quinquennial Inspection requested by the Representative Church Body in Dublin.

A notable cost, not within the control of The United Parish, was in Diocesan payments which totalled £18,309, an increase of £1,813 (11% above the 2021 charge).

A further external influence on the level of expenditure was the rise in monetary inflation impacting upon the cost of living. An example of this was The United Parish energy bills which increased by £7,000 from the previous year.

Total receipts on unrestricted funds were £165,973, of which £140,019 was unrestricted voluntary donations, and a further £25,954 was from Gift Aid. Restricted receipts of £13,700 were also recorded.

The final monetary position detailed in the Financial Statements, was a surplus of £409. This, however, includes transactions in respect of the 'Together Ballyclare' initiative, which is not an asset of The United Parish, and a restricted one-off Grant of £12,000, secured to part-fund a new Baby Basics building, which could not be used to fund general church running expenses.

Taking the adjustments into account, the year-end position was a deficit/ overspend of £9,250. This equated to £1.05 of spend for every £1 of income received.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing Document and Constitution of The United Parish

Chapter III of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland governs Parishes and Parochial Organisation. The Select Vestry members are Charity Trustees.

Recruitment and Appointment of Select Vestry

As well as Constitutional requirements, parishes are obliged to implement Diocesan Regulations. Members of the General Vestry can vote and stand for election to the Select Vestry. Meetings of the General Vestry are held at least once a year. The Select Vestry is elected as part of this General Vestry meeting. The Select Vestry will hold their positions for a period of one year. Select Vestry members may be re-elected annually and there is no limit on the number of terms which may be served.

Pay and Remuneration

The incumbent receives a stipend in accordance with figures approved by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland and office and locomotory allowances.

Organisational Structure

The Select Vestry is responsible for the day-to-day management of the parish. The Select Vestry consists of the member of the clergy serving in the parish, any curate assistant ("the curate"), the churchwardens, the glebe wardens and generally not more than twelve other members of the General Vestry elected at the General Vestry.

The Select Vestry is chaired by the incumbent or other member of the clergy officiating in the parish. Select Vestry members are responsible for making decisions on matters of general concern and importance to the parish including deciding how parish funds are to be applied.

The Select Vestry meets at times fixed by the members or by the diocesan synod. Special meetings may be convened at any time by the chairperson or the churchwardens. In 2022, the Select Vestry met 11 times during the year (meetings held in the months of January, February, March, April, May, June, September, October and December with an average attendance of over 75%. The Annual Easter meeting was held on 4 May 2022 and was chaired by the current incumbent, Rev. J Campbell-Smyth.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees



Revd Jonny Campbell-Smyth (Rector)



Mrs Lorraine Ogilby (Honorary Secretary)