

Charity Registration Number	NIC103558
Charity Address	St John's Church Office 3 Doagh Road, BT39 9BG
Trustees	Mr Andrew Brannigan, Dr Christine Burns, Mr David Brown, The Revd Jonathan Campbell-Smyth, Mr Paul Comins, Mr Colin Ferguson, Mrs Trina Grant, Dr David McIlhagger, Mrs Lorraine Ogilby, Mr Michael Ogilby Miss Margaret Scott, Mr Lawrence Stanford, Dr Peter Watson, Mrs Francis Wilson, Miss Rachel Wilson, Mrs Pam Winter
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 2023.

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

In recent weeks I have been sitting in some verses within the book of Joshua. You may know the story but let's back up a bit. God chose Abraham and his people became the Nation of Israel who are the enslaved in Egypt. And so through Moses God rescued Israel out of Egypt, he made a covenant at Mount Sinai and so he led them through the wilderness. And so they camped outside the promised land and Moses called them to obey God's command so they show all other Nations what God is like. The Book of Joshua picks up right after Moses has died, and Israel is ready to enter the land. Joshua is appointed as Israel's new leader. And so after spying out the land, Joshua leads all of Israel across the Jordan river and into the land. Just as the sea parted for Moses in the Exodus, so here the river Jordan parts and the priests carry the ark of the covenant across leading all of Israel with them. And while the sea is parted, Joshua instructs the priests to take 12 stones out of the water and bring them with them to the promised land. These would be for the 12 tribes to remember what God had done for them. Then on the 10th day of the first month following coming out of the Jordan, the people camped in a place called Gilgal, and there the 12 stones were gathered. It would remain a lasting legacy of God's faithfulness to the people. It also ensured that people were reminded of the many good things in their life, the times to be thankful.

In fact there are 3 examples early on in the bible of stones being gathered. The first was in Genesis 28 when Jacob set a pillar in Bethel to commemorate a powerful vision

of God that he experienced while sleeping there. It was that important that Jacob felt it was important to commemorate it. He did not want to forget it. By remembering it, it would increase his and others' faith.

The second example was at Gilgal that Joshua instructed after coming across the Jordan into a new land. This time it would remind future generations of the God of miracles so that their faith would be renewed.

The third example was in 1 Samuel 7 where the Israelites are under imminent attack from the Philistines, and God leads the Israelites to victory. So Samuel erects a large stone and names it Ebenezer, meaning the stone of help. It would ensure that people would not forget God's grace. He was the one deserving the victory and not the Israelites.

Now don't worry I'm not leading us to put a large stone at the front of our churches, but there is something very important for us at this time. I have been reflecting on the incredible ways in which people serve within this church family of Christ Church and St John's. I suppose in more recent times in my new role as Rural Dean, I have been able to reflect on other churches and where they are. Folks, I am so thankful for all of you, and for everyone who serves in our parish, but more than anything I am deeply thankful to God for how he has walked with us. And tonight I want to lay a metaphorical stone in glory to God, so that we don't allow things to pass and forget all that he has done in the busyness of what we want to do next.

In this past year I have observed as new families have joined us, and with that how they have been so warmly welcomed into the church family. There's a stone to lay down already. I have watched as God by his Holy Spirit has been working in people's lives - I've had the pleasure of being in homes where people have submitted their lives to the Lord (there's another stone), we have seen an increase in people wanting to study God's word through the week, and so a massive thank you to all those who lead bible studies, house groups and for the many more people who now attend these (another stone).

I've observed what God has been doing in our young people and youth. We are so blessed to have the gifts in leaders to disciple our young people, and whilst I realise the incredible sacrifice it means to leaders, it is so heart-warming to see our young people growing deeper in their love of God. We now have a thriving youth discipleship programme, we have a pattern emerging of young people in mission each Summer, we have the early shoots of spiritual growth through our youth bible studies in Christ Church, we have young people leading our worship, we have young people becoming involved in prayer ministry, and my hope is from September that we will have a monthly evening worship aimed at our young people and young adults. (more stones to set down)

I've observed how from very small beginnings years ago when I reached out to the Northern Health & Social Care Trust to see how we could help our community, to now have a thriving Compassion ministry overseen by Frances Wilson with our Baby Basics ministry, Munch on Mondays, our continuing links with Newtownabbey Foodbank, the school uniforms and the connections we make with families through that, the partnership links that have been made with other community groups in the town, the

CAP programme, and now most recently our Kintsugi Hope programme. I am reminded of how Jesus recognised the distinction between the sheep and the goats, and how he recognised those who helped the hungry, welcomed the stranger, clothed those who were without, cared for the sick, and visited those in prison or in trouble (another stone).

I've observed the deep pastoral heart that exists amongst the body, to care for others, and it is greatly appreciated how a number of you help with pastoral support, visiting the housebound, provide hospitality, bringing people together through Mothers' Union, and offering prayer ministry to people who seek after God's comfort. I've observed a small group of very generous people working well ahead to create little gifts or blessings or presents on certain Sundays and other days so that the body of the church knows how much everyone is loved (another stone of thankfulness to God).

I've observed and have been deeply blessed with incredible musicians and singers across both churches who are foundational to our worship gatherings. It has been an incredible blessing to have Chris McCabe onboard as part of the staff and I know he has been such an encouragement to the worship team as well as the AV team at the back of St John's. It's also exciting that we will now be progressing with a Choir Director for Christ Church who can develop the worship there also. And then there are the teams of people leading services, teaching, manning car parks on Sundays, leading intercessions, making teas & coffees, the list is endless. (There's a stone to remember God's faithfulness)

I've observed the intentional partnership links that exist all over our parish to bring glory to God. One such partnership has been with CMS Ireland, and our links to Tujisaidie and Tumaini Projects in Nairobi, Kenya. And what an incredible blessing to travel out to see these ministries and the people for myself. Right now with the help of a small group within the churches, we are prioritising the next set of tasks in our 3 year partnership plan, with the hope of some kind of visit in 2025 either with Kenyans coming here or a team going out there (and so another stone laid down).

I could keep going on and on in thankfulness to God, but I want to finish with the incredible support that is required to oversee the operational management of the church. You will be aware I'm sure that overseeing a church today is much different than what it was 40 years ago. There is much more paperwork and policies than there ever was, and so behind that are many people to ensure we stay on top of this, seeking God's wisdom as we remain stewards of the resources he gives us. Tonight we say goodbye to the current Select Vestry who have worked through a number of important issues in this past year, we have a Safeguarding panel that oversees the safety of our young people and leaders, we have a team of people who look after the buildings (or glebes as they are known), and we have an administrative engine that is called David who ensures all these various plates keep spinning. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to David. He is a man who has to tolerate my attention to detail, and our friendship at times is like a marriage - where we work our way through things for the greater good of God's church. There's also the role that Lawrence plays in overseeing the financial accounting of the church - this is far from a small job with a parish that has so many different strings, alongside Ted, Trina and David helping also.

But folks in recognising the operational support in the parish, I want to express my gratitude and appreciation now to one person. Many of you will know by now that Lorraine Ogilby is from tonight stepping back as Honorary Secretary to the Select Vestry. Lorraine has carried out this function for 13 years now and she has done this with incredible efficiency and articulation. And along the way, she has always faithfully supported and encouraged my ministry, she has helped me when I've felt like giving up, and she has sacrificed lots to carry out this important role. Lorraine I really don't think there is enough ways to thank you for your service to God's Church and to the Select Vestry, but I hope this small token of our appreciation will go some way in expressing how much we want to thank you for your time and dedication. I know that this season is clearly a time of great change for you and the family, and I know you will be continuing to support us on a number of this. But may God bless you for all that you have given.

As I place these metaphorical stones down in thankfulness to God, there are others tonight that I also want to recognise in their service. You will probably be aware that there are a number of people stepping down tonight, and I know that each Sunday these two people make a difference, and bring a smile to each person that walks through the doors of our churches. Christine Burns is my warden in Christ Church, and Christine has not been a member of our church family too long. But in the time that I have known you Christine, you have been such an encouragement to me - you have diligently cared for our beautiful church in Ballynure, and I know that having come in recent years to us, that the role of Church Warden has helped you to get to know people better. I can't thank you enough for your support.

And Paul Comins is our Warden for St John's. With the transitions after COVID, Paul has actually done more than is normal. At one point I was wondering whether Paul would just continue in the role in a life-long commitment, as that is what can happen in some churches, but alas Paul is rightly wanting to spend time again sitting in the pews with with Kim. Paul thank you for your quiet way of getting on with things, getting them done, and being incredibly reliant. Thank you for your patience with me, and may God bless the rest you now will enjoy.

Folks tonight, I wanted to put down on paper a record of thankfulness, or as it would be done in Old Testament times, a series of stones that remind us all of God's goodness, but importantly declare to our future generation how God has walked faithfully with us. It is so easy to forget what he has been doing, and what he will do in us. So often don't we observe that God does a new thing in us, or blesses us, and maybe after a few days or weeks we might be thankful, but then soon we forget. And a bit like the Israelites we move back into complaining.

But with stones set in certain places, the people were given a tangible sign to remind them of the goodness of God, and that's what I want to do tonight. Tonight is me saying thank you. Thank you for your service. Thank you for your encouragement. I may not have named everyone tonight, but I still want you all to know the feeling of joy that comes to me as I think about you, and as I pray for you all.

So just to finish, I want to focus my attention on one person within our parish who has been a steady anchor through it all. Every year from now on at this gathering, I would like to recognise someone for their commitment to the parish. It doesn't mean they

are in any way better, but it just recognises the many years that they have faithfully served God in this church. You know whenever I am talking about our church in our community, there will normally be one person's name who is mentioned often. Before I had even set foot in the parish, this lady was finding out things about me. She was never someone to mess with, I knew who was boss, but I also saw an incredible loving side to this lady when she would drop into the parish office with Asher's soup and a bread roll. You will already know who I am talking about. Margaret Scott has been that foundation to St John's, and probably if you added up the cumulative number of years in different roles and responsibilities it will run into hundreds of years. To give you an idea, we think that Margaret served in Sunday School for 60 years. Then there was her time in the choir. Her time in Boys Brigade, her time on Select Vestry, her role as warden, the number of hours sitting in the parish office checking that David was doing everything right. Then there was the role of being mother to so many children, and then your pastoral function of popping round or phoning parishioners to check in on them. We all love you Margaret, and our church family would simply not be the same without you. I'd encourage you to continue to keep a suspicious eye on all of us, and always feel free to keep us in our place. I have had the privilege to see you in the good days but also the tough days. I know your love for the Lord Jesus runs very deep, and all that you do wants to bring honour to his name. Tonight, I and everyone here want to thank you for how you have shaped many lives, and have made an incredible impact to our community, to this church, and to those who love you. May God bless you in this season.

On a night where our focus has been on God's goodness, and also my thankfulness for what he is able to do through all of you and others, I want us to sing. I'm reminded in the book of Ezra that as the people began to rebuild the temple, they took many opportunities to praise God. And as the foundations of the temple were laid here's what it says - Ezra 3:11 With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord: "He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord.

It is good to take tonight to praise the goodness of God, and proclaim his faithfulness into the next generation of this Church family.

Rev Jonny

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 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 legacy of the Covid 19 pandemic continued to affect church activities and congregation sizes, through the generosity and faithfulness of our parishioners we were able to maintain our level of 'Voluntary Giving'.

A major achievement for the United Parish in 2023 was the purchase and installation of a dedicated Baby Basics building at a cost of approximately £20,000. This was primarily funded by way of securing external Grants, over the past 2 years, through our Compassion Ministries.

Under the spiritual direction of the Reverend Jonny, we are a church that believes in tithing our income (at least one 10th of what we receive). In the 2023 financial period we remained faithful to this, by way of distributing £18,269 to local and overseas missions and charities, secured by way of tithe and various collections.

Whilst we saw an increase in expenditure on 'Repairs/ Upkeep to our properties, a significant backlog of repairs exists which will require substantial funding. This workload has been noted in the Quinquennial Inspection requested by the Representative Church Body in Dublin.

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 cleaning costs which increased by £3,000 from the previous year.

Total receipts on unrestricted funds were £186,474, of which £146,034 was unrestricted voluntary donations, and a further £26,796 was from Gift Aid. Restricted receipts of £22,050 were also recorded.

The final monetary position detailed in the Financial Statements, was a deficit of £5,653. This equates to £1.02 of spend for every £1 of income received. The shortfall was met by the use of financial reserves.

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 2023, the Select Vestry met 10 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 19 April 2023 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)