

St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2022

The trustees present the annual report and statements of Receipts and Payments and Statement of Assets and Liabilities for St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh for the year ended 31 December 2022.

The trustees note that a review of 2022 should not overlook the unusual year that it was. Restrictions because of the Omicron variant still limited parish life a little in the early part of the year. Moreover, in the latter part of the year, with less restrictions, the parish then went through a re-building phase.

Objectives and Activities

The charitable purpose of the Church of Ireland is the advancement of religion.

The principal function of St John the Evangelist, Church of Ireland Parish Church of Killyleagh, is to support the advancement of the Christian religion by promoting, through the work of St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh, 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, St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh 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 St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh.

Achievements, Performance & Public Benefit

Clerical leadership

Rev Colin Darling continued as incumbent during 2022 and also served as Area Dean for the Lecale Area Deanery, in which the parish is situated..

The parish also called upon the experience of Rev Hector Wanliss, licenced to officiate in Killyleagh Parish and Emeritus Diocesan Reader, Mrs Hilary Patterson who assisted leading services.

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Church Property

The Trustees are generally satisfied that all church properties and grounds are exceptionally well maintained by Glebe Wardens and assistants.

During 2022, reports were commissioned to assess the potential repair work to the church roof, to upgrade the side door entrance, and to install new lighting. A contractor was engaged late in 2022 to carry out the work of improving the lights and installing emergency lighting.

Public Worship

Throughout 2022, St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh, provided weekly worship on a Sunday morning, occasionally on a Sunday afternoon and on a Wednesday morning, including prayers for the sick and those in need.

The Trustees record that the average congregation size in 2022 was 25% - 30% lower than pre-COVID, although some festival services had larger attendances. Additionally, when the online worshippers are included, albeit without confirmation of the online data, the combined in-person and online worshipping numbers are higher than pre-COVID times.

Most Sunday mid-morning services and some others were streamed live allowing those who wished to worship an option of either coming to the church or joining online. With the facility to join the worship via the Parish YouTube channel, worshippers also could choose a time to view and participate in the service at a time to suit themselves.

Services were also held at other times to mark special civil and religious occasions, with members of the public warmly welcomed. In June, a service was held to mark Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's 70 years as monarch. Attendees included local politicians, the Lord Lieutenant, Sea Cadets, clergy of other local churches and other members of the community. A Presbyterian / Church of Ireland joint choir sang a special anthem composed for the occasion. 7 trees were planted in the graveyard by Sea Cadets, one for each decade of the Queen's reign, with the Lord Lieutenant putting the finishing planting touches to the most prominent tree in the turning circle grass area.

Other public community services included a service marking the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Harvest Thanksgiving in October, British Legion Remembrance Day Commemoration and Festival of 9 Lessons and Carols in December, again with a joint Presbyterian / Church of Ireland choir. These public services allowed the church to open its doors to other community members and their families.

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Youth Work

St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh is committed to seeing the younger generation of Killyleagh residents grow up understanding the Christian faith and learning what the Bible teaches and points to. Therefore, provision of teaching, fun and fellowship for any young members of the congregation and for the wider community is central to the ethos of St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh.

The parish adopted a two-pronged approach to youth work – with parishioners and with the general community of Killyleagh.

Young parishioners between the ages of 4 and 14 met each Sunday January to June 2022 to learn, to spend time together, to support each other and to prepare for involvement in public worship. A team of leaders and assistants, using the Diocesan Sunday School Jigsaw material, provided teaching and structure to Sunday's Activities. The leaders all come from within the church community.

The Killyleagh Hub was launched in September 2022 to replace Sunday School, with a radical move away from meeting each Sunday. The Killyleagh Hub aim was to incorporate gathering for events, some simple teaching, a limited commitment to attending certain services and building up a greater connection with the Parish. A dark walk, a trip to Ice Hockey and a Pantomime visit were all planned in Autumn 2022.

A team of leaders and assistants who previously had supervised Sunday School agreed to provide leadership and supervision for The Killyleagh Hub. They were supplemented on a one-off basis by parents and others.

The young members of the church additionally are encouraged in acts of public service. A Nativity Service involving The Killyleagh Hub members, leaders and teenage parishioners was enjoyed by the congregation in the church and online in December.

Killyleagh Parish Church continued its sponsorship of two children in Honduras and Burkina Faso, through the Christian charity Compassion.

Although regular attendance on Sunday mornings is lower, attendance at major church festivals increased. And the numbers registering for The Killyleagh Hub was considerably higher than for the Sunday School.

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Youth Work (continued)

In September 2018, a new cross-community youth club for any primary school aged children of Killyleagh and the surrounding areas was established. The intention was to give children a safe place to go and meet other children in a fun environment, with occasional educational or faith-based sessions and to allow many without any connections either with a church or with other members of the community to experience something new.

The youth club continued to meet in 2022, with occasional breaks for COVID related illness in the early part of the year.

In September, the lower age limit for membership was reduced to 3, with the result that 64 registered for membership. Two sessions are held each Thursday evening, to allow Safeguarding supervision ratios to be met. Children were split into groups dependant on age, with 3–7-year-olds coming at an early time and 8–11-year-old children coming later. 14 members from previous years who had passed the upper age limit stayed connected as assistant leaders in 2022.

The Youth Club is led by a parishioner with 20+ years' experience in leading youth organisations. There were 5 other regular adult leaders.

Safeguarding Trust

In relation to younger members under 18 and indeed to any members at risk or in need of protection, St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh, adheres to the Church of Ireland Safeguarding Trust policies for protection of children and adults. The Trustees believe that any potential harm from activities carried out on its premises, or under the auspices of its organisations, has been mitigated as far as is possible. There is a 3-person Safeguarding Trust panel, chaired by the Rector, all of whom have received Church of Ireland central training. The panel has responsibility for overseeing the Parish's adherence to the Safeguarding Trust policies and receiving notification about concerns anyone may have.

A diocesan-led Safeguarding Audit was carried out towards the end of 2022, with some administrative issues to be addressed and leaders who hadn't received Safeguarding training, or refresher training, within the past 3 years required to undergo further training.

The Select Vestry, incumbent and volunteers are also committed to upholding good practice in the parish's ministry with all adults, but in particular with those in need of greater protection.

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Community Leadership

St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh, provides leadership in the local Girl's Brigade, associated with Killyleagh Presbyterian Church, where a member is the Captain, and other members serve as Officers and in the overall GB leadership in Northern Ireland, where a member is currently the Chairperson of GBNI. Members of St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh, have attended the GB.

Public outdoor services marking Remembrance Day and the 40th anniversary of the Falklands war, with special tribute being paid to the only person from Northern Ireland to die in the war, were led by the Rector.

A memorial service was led by the Rector and Rev Wanliss at Killyleagh Yacht Club, following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Services for lifetime 'Rites of passage'

Throughout 2022 St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh provided to its members, and additionally to other members of the community in appropriate circumstance, Christian services to mark various life events of significance, such as marriage, death and baptism.

In 2022, the Parish charged no fees for funerals or baptism services, though there are published fees for graveyard burials and the erection of tombstones.

As well as the church building itself, which has seen worship on its site and within its building since 1640, and which is cared for and maintained lovingly by dedicated members, St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh maintains a working 360-year-old graveyard in a tidy and respectful manner in an area of outstanding beauty. This is maintained, managed and presented to a high and commendable standard through the dedication, commitment and sheer hard work, on a voluntary basis, of Glebe Wardens and some other Parish members.

The graveyard is available and open to all members of the community to come and spend reflective time, or to come and be peaceful at the place where a loved one has been laid to rest. During 2022 the gates to the graveyard were unlocked or left open for the whole year. Local residents are aware they can enter it at any time. The Trustees are committed to maintain this sensitive support to local residents and those with loved ones interred within.

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Services for lifetime 'Rites of passage' (continued)

Moreover, the church building itself is available, on request, free of charge, to anyone to visit merely out of interest or for spiritual purposes and the Trustees of St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh welcome individuals and groups from the locality or further afield for tours, with a local historian available to provide tours, if requested.

Communications

The Parish communicates with its members and the wider community using a combination of traditional methods (church notices, posters, church magazines, Christmas card and small gift to senior members and electronic methods (website, Facebook, texts and email).

During 2022, the Parish continued to stream services (live) using its own YouTube Channel. In so doing, the Parish is able to reach out to members both in-person and online.

Online communication was prevalent during 2022 and the Trustees acknowledge the efforts of those involved in publishing material on the website, posting on Facebook, operating sound and camera equipment in-church.

Additionally at times, material was distributed to parishioners by email, for example church magazines.

Those without access to the internet received paper copies of Church Magazines.

Trustees are satisfied that communication is appropriate and within general guidelines and that record-keeping of member's data meets requirements of GDPR legislation.

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Financial Review

The receipts and payments account shows net outgoing funds of £17,468 after payments made in relation to capital costs totalling £14,376.

Income has decreased from £118,752 to £82,767, mainly due to the reduction in Gift Aid receipts for the year down from £15,484 in prior year and the one-off local restriction support scheme funds received in the prior year of £14,284. Of the income, £73,853 relates to unrestricted funds and £8,914 relates to restricted funds. The restricted funds represent funding for the streaming equipment of £110, church year fees of £1,400, General Building funds of £2,299, Sunday School donations of £1,134, baptisms of £230 and amounts raised for other charities of £3,741.

Expenditure (excluding payments to purchase fixed assets) have increased from £75,591 to £85,859, with the key increase being to Rector's stipend. Payments to the Rector were understated in the prior year and therefore additional top up was required to be paid in 2022, and the charge for the year returned to correct levels.

The Trustees are aware of some age-related wear and tear improvements that could be made to the church building, both internally and externally. To pay for this work, parishioners have chosen to allocate some personal giving to a building fund, specifically for this purpose.

With regard to the holding of Reserves, the Trustees believe that it is not within Christian principles or Biblical guidelines to retain funds, for some unforeseen, unknown, 'rainy day' occurrence, over and above what would be considered prudent to maintain the parish's current properties, or to meet its known ongoing liabilities and financial commitments. The Reserves held are restricted as per Financial Review. Should St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh ever have non-earmarked funds in reserve, such reserve would be considered for use in mission and outreach.

The parish is in a deficit position this year due to the continued reduction in regular giving via either freewill offering or regular donations. However, it should be noted that a gift aid claim for the year to 31 December 2022 has not been submitted. There continues to be a reliance on the work of the charity shop to bridge the gap between donations and outgoings. The Trustees acknowledge the work of the volunteers at the shop and would like to express our gratitude for their contributions.

The Trustees do not take lightly the fact that normal income, including from the shop, does not comfortably exceed outgoings from the General operating account. The Trustees are fully aware of the need to ensure income is sufficient to meet liabilities going forward and will continue to carefully monitor the parish's financial position regularly.

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Going Concern

The Trustees have considered the funds available and income sources and are satisfied that there are adequate funds in place to ensure that the Parish can continue its activities for the foreseeable future. Accordingly, the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2022 can be signed off as a going concern.

Structure, Governance and Management Governing Document and Constitution of the Charity

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

Recruitment and Appointment of Select Vestry (Trustees)

All members of the Church of Ireland who are over the age of 18 and are either resident within the parish or live elsewhere but have been accustomed members of the congregation for at least three months, may register as members of the general vestry of the parish, allowing them to attend and vote at meetings of the general vestry and to 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 current Incumbent of the Parish is paid the minimum stipend and suggested office and locomotory allowances directly by St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh, in accordance with figures approved by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland.

Organisational Structure

The Select Vestry is responsible for the day-to-day management of the parish. The Select Vestry consists of the Rector serving in the parish, the churchwardens, the glebe wardens and generally not more than twelve other members of the general vestry elected at the General Vestry Meeting.

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Organisational Structure (continued)

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 full Select Vestry met on 4 occasions. Issues were also dealt with by email. The average attendance was 70%.

Additionally, 5 separate Select Vestry sub-groups were set up in 2020 to progress matters where possible. Each sub-group reports back to the whole Select Vestry which retains the final authority. The sub-groups are in the areas of Finance, Technology, Property Maintenance & Property Projects, Governance and Stewardship, Parish Centre, and Shop. These sub-groups met in addition to the full Select Vestry meetings.

Compliance with Public Benefit

The Trustees of St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh, have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities entered into during the year, many of which are referred to above, have helped to achieve the Parish's objectives and activities, as well as providing public benefit.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the receipts and payments account and statement of assets and liabilities in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

The trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records that are sufficient to 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 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

Signed on behalf of the Trustees
12 April 2023