

St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023

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 2023.

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 until Sunday 26 March 2023 before moving to become incumbent of the joint parishes of Ballymore and Clare in Tandragee. During his period as incumbent in 2023 Rev Darling also served as Area Dean for the Lecale Area Deanery, in which the parish is situated..

For the period April to December 2023 services were led by Rev Hector Wanliss who is licenced to officiate in Killyleagh Parish. He was assisted by Emeritus Diocesan Reader, Mrs Hilary Patterson.

On occasion worship was led by Rev Pat Mollan or the Rev Adrian Dorrian, Area Dean for the Lecale Area Deanery.

During the period of the vacancy in 2023 (April to December) twice weekly pastoral visits were carried out by Rev Tim Eldon from Drumbeg Parish. The Trustees record their gratitude to the Rev Eldon for carrying out this important outreach work. The relevant fees were paid to the Rev. Eldon in accordance with figures approved by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland.

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Vacancy

After the departure of the previous incumbent, Rev Colin Darling, on Sunday 26 March 2023, the parish entered a period of Vacancy.

From that time a process began as set out by the Church of Ireland Constitution.

An inspection was carried out on the rectory to determine any necessary repair work to be carried out before the appointment of a new incumbent.

During May and June, two Church of Ireland Commissioners met with the Select Vestry. Their role was to determine how best the vacancy could be filled. Their recommendation was that the parish could advertise for a Priest-In-Charge to be appointed for a period not more than 5 years. The appointment would be made by Bishop David McClay with involvement by the four Parochial Nominators.

During that period the four Parochial Nominators, with assistance from various Select Vestry members and parishioners, produced a Parish Profile document to be used as a reference for our church for any applicants to the vacancy.

In July, the four appointed Parochial Nominators met with Bishop David and upon final approval of the Parish Profile, the vacancy was advertised.

In September Bishop David and the four Parochial Nominators met with the applicants.

Further interviews were carried out, by Bishop David McClay and Archdeacon Rev Jim Cheshire, and subsequently Bishop David appointed the Rev Eben Grobbelaar, Rector of St Georges Anglican Church in Parktown, Johannesburg as Priest-In-Charge to our parish to serve for a period not more than 5 years.

In December a letter from Bishop David advising of the appointment was read out to the congregations at services by Parochial Nominators.

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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 early 2023, a contractor was commissioned to install new ceiling lights plus new emergency lighting in the Church, and new acoustic panels were installed in the Church Hall

During the vacancy in 2023, the rectory was inspected and consequently a new boiler, radiators, upgraded uPVC front door and fascia boards were installed.

Public Worship

Throughout 2023, St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh, provided weekly worship on Sunday mornings at 9am and 11am services together with occasional seasonal evening services (eg Holy Week, Harvest and Christmas).

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. When the number of online worshippers are included, the combined in-person and online worshipping numbers are higher than pre-COVID times.

Services were also held at other times to mark special civil and religious occasions, with members of the public warmly welcomed. Other public community services included an Easter Morning Sunrise service on Sunday 9 April 2023, a service was held to mark the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III on Sunday 7 May 2023, morning and evening service Harvest Festivals in October, and Festival of 9 Lessons and Carols in December. A joint Church of Ireland / Presbyterian choir led the singing at the special evening services.

At the beginning of December, a 3-day Christmas Tree Festival was held in the Church. It was opened with carol singing by joint choirs from three local primary schools and closed with a service of carols led by the Rural Dean.

These public services allowed the church to open its doors to other community members and their families and lunch was provided at the Coronation service and the morning Harvest Festival.

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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.

The young members of the church are encouraged to attend and participate in acts of public service. A Nativity Service involving leaders and teenage parishioners was enjoyed by the congregation in the church and online in December.

On Sunday 24 December 2023 the Rev Adrian Dorrian led a Crib Service which involved younger members of the congregation.

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.

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 met throughout 2023, and is committed to the young people in the community.

The youth club had 64 children registered for membership. Two sessions are held each Thursday evening, to allow Safeguarding supervision ratios to be met. Children are split into groups dependant on age, with 3–7-year-olds coming at an early time and 8–11-year-old children coming later.

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

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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.

Community Leadership

St John the Evangelist, Parish Church of Killyleagh, provides leadership in the local Girl's Brigade, associated with Killyleagh Presbyterian Church. The GB Captain and some of the Officers are Parishioners and also serve 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, are members of the GB.

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Services for lifetime 'Rites of passage'

Throughout 2023 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 2023, the Parish charged no fees for funerals or baptism services, donations were encouraged. 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 2023 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.

Moreover, the church building itself is available, on request, 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.

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Communications

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

During 2023, 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 2023 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.

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

Fund Raising

In late 2023 a Fireside Quiz raised £145 for parish funds.

In December 2023 a 3-day Christmas Tree Festival took place. The event was superbly supported by the local community – and beyond, with 64 local business and organisations provided and decorated trees.

The programme of events included an opening carol service involving the local primary schools, a children's Nativity, musical contributions from the joint church and Presbyterian choirs, Killinchy Silver Band, the Crukes Ukelele Band, and local musician Conal Montgomery. There was also carols played on both the organ and piano.

The Festival closed with a church service led by Rev Adrian Dorrian. In all it was estimated that over 1000 visitors attended across the 3 days. The event raised £5,010 (before expenses of £412) the proceeds were split between parish funds and Daisy Lodge short break centre in Newcastle for families affected by cancer -£2,300 was presented to Daisy Lodge.

The event was widely praised as a fantastic outreach event.

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Financial Review

The receipts and payments account shows net incoming funds of £2,998 after payments made in relation to capital costs totalling £40,190.

Income has increased from £82,767 to £101,194, mainly due to the Gift Aid receipts in the year of £11,663 vs £nil in the prior year, together with the very successful Christmas Tree Festival which raised £5,010. Of the income, £94,301 relates to unrestricted funds and £6,893 relates to restricted funds. The restricted funds represent churchyard fees of £1,900, General Building funds of £1,992, Sunday School / youth ministry donations of £551, baptisms of £60 and amounts raised for other charities of £2,390.

Expenditure (excluding payments to purchase fixed assets) have decreased from £85,859 to £58,006, with the key decrease being Rector's stipend and associated costs following the departure of Rev Colin Darling from 26 March 2023.

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. The balance on this fund at 31 December 2023 is £17,252.

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.

Whilst the parish is in a surplus position this year, it must be noted that there is a continuing decline in the level of regular giving via either freewill offering or regular donations in total down from £40,417 to £38,960. 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 2023 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 previous Incumbent of the Parish was 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.

During the vacancy the relevant fees were paid to the Rev Hector Wanliss, the Rev Pat Mollan and the Rev Adrian Dorrian 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 – between April to December 2023 all Select Vestry meetings were chaired by Rev Adrian Dorrian. 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 full Select Vestry met on 9 occasions. Issues were also dealt with by email. The average attendance was 81%.

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.

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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

Rev Eben Grobbelaar
12 April 2024