



## **West Kirk Presbyterian**

**A congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland**

### **Trustees' Annual Report** **for the year ended 31 December 2023**

**Registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland**

**Charity Commission NI Registration No: 104287**

# West Kirk Presbyterian Church

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**Trustees' Annual Report**  
**for the year ended 31 December 2023**

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The Trustees present their Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 including a Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at that date.

**REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS**

West Kirk Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
234 – 236 Shankill Road  
Belfast  
BT13 2BL  
Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC104287)

**CHARITY TRUSTEES**

The Charity Trustees who were trustees at the date of this report were:

David Clawson	Peter Burke	Joseph Cummings
Kenneth Davidson	Noel Hunter	David Kane
Fred Maginnis	Vincent Shortt	Patrick Smyth
George Stewart	Roy Thompson	Michael Waddell
Desi Williams	Norman Windrum	

**PRINCIPAL OFFICE BEARERS**

Minister:	Rev. David Clawson
Associate Minister:	Rev. Peter Burke
Clerk of Session:	Mr. George Stewart
Treasurer:	Mr. David Ritchie

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER**

FPM Accountants Ltd.  
Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditors  
Unit 1, Building 10  
Central Park  
Mallusk  
BT36 4FS

**BANKERS**

Ulster Bank  
Shankill Road Branch  
185 – 189 Shankill Road  
Belfast  
BT13 1FH

**SOLICITORS**

Hewitt & Gilpin Solicitors  
Thomas House  
14 – 16 James Street South  
Belfast  
BT2 7GA

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**STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT**

**The Kirk Session**

The charity trustees of the congregation are the members of the Kirk Session. Under the congregation's governing document, The Code, the Book of the Constitution and Government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Kirk Session seeks to watch over and promote the spiritual interest of the congregation and of persons who are not connected with any congregation within its bounds. It ensures pastoral care is in place in the congregation and seeks to further the contribution of the Church to Christian witness and service in the local community. The Kirk Session has delegated to its Congregational Committee the temporal affairs of the congregation including administering all funds and property belonging to the congregation. Members of the Kirk Session are also members of the Congregational Committee and the other members are elected by the voting members of the congregation and serve for a period of 3 years. The present Congregational Committee took up office in January 2019. Following the amalgamation of West Kirk and Crumlin Road Presbyterian Church, the Committee was enlarged by the inclusion of 6 members of the former Crumlin Road congregation. To give sufficient time for this enlarged committee to function well the Kirk Session has decided to delay the election of a new Congregational Committee until 2024.

The Kirk Session consists of the ordained minister and the ruling elders of the congregation. All members are entitled to make proposals, speak and exercise equal voting rights at meetings, except that the Moderator, the minister in active duty in the congregation, has no deliberative but only a casting vote.

Stated meetings of the Kirk Session are held normally eight times in each year, and in 2023 we have been pleased to keep to that pattern.

To be chosen for the office of the eldership in the congregation a person must be a voting member and a regular attendant on its ordinances. The selection of those proposed to be called to the office can be either by the congregation or by the Kirk Session. Normally we have adopted the former method. Members proposed are elected if they obtain the votes of two thirds of the voting members present at a meeting of the congregation.

**Presbytery**

Under the Presbyterian Church in Ireland form of governance the corporate oversight of a congregation is the responsibility of a Presbytery which superintends generally the spiritual and temporal affairs of the congregations assigned to it by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. West Kirk congregation of the Presbyterian Church has been assigned to the North Belfast Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The membership of the Presbytery consists mainly of the active ministers of congregations assigned to it by the General Assembly, ministers who have retired from active duty and elders appointed by the Kirk Sessions of the congregations in the Presbytery.

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**The General Assembly**

The General Assembly is the supreme court of the Church, representing in one body the whole Church and acting as its supreme legislative, administrative and judicial authority in dealing with all matters brought before it. The General Assembly is normally constituted during the first week in June for worship and to conduct its business. At the end of business it is dissolved. The membership of the General Assembly consists mainly of the active ministers of each congregation, retired ministers and a representative elder appointed by the Kirk Session of each congregation.

**DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE**

The charitable purpose of the congregation is the advancement of religion.

West Kirk congregation is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, as a Reformed Church within the wider body of Christ is grounded in the Scriptures, and exists to love and honour God through faith in His Son and by the power of His Spirit, and to enable her members to play their part in fulfilling God's mission to our world.

The purpose and vision of the congregation of West Kirk can be expressed in 3 words: Maturity, Ministry and Mission. Our aim is to help our members towards **maturity** of Christian faith through worship and teaching, so that they express that faith in a **ministry** of support, encouragement and care for one another, and in **mission** to the community and world around us as we help in practical ways and share with others the Christian gospel to which we are committed.

The congregation aims to fulfil our Purpose and Vision as a family of God's people by ensuring that our commitment and faithfulness to God and our relationships with each other are built upon the Word and promises of God.

As a family we seek to care well for the young among us as we engage with them, encourage and nurture them in the faith of Jesus Christ.

We seek, in ways which will be described later, to be an outward looking fellowship concerned for the wellbeing of the community in our parish area.

As a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland we believe the Bible to be our supreme authority in what we believe and in how we act. We are committed also to the subordinate standards of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, confident that they set out what we understand the Bible teaches on key matters of Christian faith and practice.

**ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES**

In our last report we stated that in 2022 we were able to resume many aspects of our congregational program step by step. We are happy to report that in 2023 our program of activities is now operating as normal.

We have even been able to add a "Youth Group" for young people of secondary school age on Sunday evenings. We have also added some new leaders to some of our groups. This has in part allowed us to set up the new youth group, and also helped to take the pressure off existing leaders through the welcome extra help.

The activities which we run each week during the church year will be described in more detail further on in this report.

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**ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

**Worship and Prayer**

The congregation meets normally for worship each Sunday at 11.30am and 6.00pm in the Church building. Tea and coffee is available prior to the morning service ; and following the evening service we stay for tea and coffee discussing around tables questions relating to the theme of the sermon, and praying together.

We held some services of Thanksgiving for the life of members who died during the year; services in which we sought to comfort the bereaved families and friends.

On Wednesday evenings a small group meet together for prayer. As yet we have not resumed our Home Bible Study Groups.

At 31 December 2023 there were 92 communicant members of the congregation; we held 4 morning and 2 evening communion services.

250 families have currently some level of connection with our congregation.

The average attendance at morning worship during the year was 100, with between 30 and 35 attending evening worship.

**Pastoral Care**

Pastoral care visitation which was impossible during the Covid-19 pandemic has resumed increasingly as we moved through 2023. It is carried out mainly by our minister, the Rev. David Clawson, and our associate minister, Rev. Peter Burke .

Some elders and others within the congregation help to some extent with this important ministry. We make every effort to support our elderly members who are no longer able to attend worship and those members who are unwell or recently bereaved.

**Mission and Outreach**

The congregation of West Kirk is committed to, and active in, outreach to our local community. Communication of the Christian gospel is a vital part of the programme of our organisations. In addition we have other activities which have an intentional outreach emphasis. A very important and useful part of our weekly programme is our Thursday Morning Outreach when each week we invite local people in for tea or coffee and the opportunity to chat. This helps us to get to know the people of the local area and in turn helps them to get to know us. We can use this time to communicate the various activities and events with people who wouldn't normally attend Sunday worship. Another means of outreach in the past were the Men's Breakfasts and Ladies' Breakfasts held on several Saturday mornings during the year. These have proved very popular in the past. It is our intention to resume these in 2024.

As a congregation we support many charities throughout the year. Most of these are local Northern Ireland based charities but some are from further afield. An example of this is when we host a coffee morning as part of our Thursday Outreach and all proceeds go to MacMillan Cancer Support. We also support the Presbyterian Childrens Society which provides help for families throughout Ireland who are going through tough times.

The congregation supports the United Appeal for Mission which is a central fund of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. This fund enables congregations to support the wider mission of the denomination carried out on a scale beyond which any congregation could do on its own. The United Appeal Fund provides financial support for mission personnel at home and overseas, assists congregations with the deployment of locally based staff, enables church planting, provides grant support for the upkeep of church premises and assists with the running costs of Union Theological College, the Church's training college for ministry students.

## West Kirk Presbyterian Church

### Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023

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#### **Presbytery**

The congregation was represented at the meetings of Presbytery in 2023 by our 2 ministers and 2 of our elders who played their part on some of the the Presbytery's Committees and Panels.

#### **The General Assembly**

At the 2023 General Assembly we were represented by our 2 ministers and 2 of our elders. In addition, one of our senior elders was appointed as a member of Assembly by its Nomination Committee.

#### **Property**

The oversight of our property is the responsibility of one of the sub-committees of our Congregational Committee. During 2023 some important improvements were carried out in our manse and routine work in our church buildings. We also continue to look after the buildings of the former Crumlin Road Presbyterian Church, and will do so until this building is sold.

#### **Organisations**

We give this brief summary of the activities carried out during the year in some of our organisations.

**Children's Church :** During morning worship children up to the age of about 9 years old move into the Church Hall at the point when the sermon will begin and they receive Bible teaching.

**The Monday Club :** This club meets every Monday night and caters for children of primary school age. The children enjoy a programme designed to encourage their educational, physical, recreational, social and spiritual development. In August of 2023 some of our leaders, along with a PCI team of Young People, ran a 3-day Holiday Bible Club attended by about 60-70 mainly local children. As we hoped would happen, some of these girls and boys then joined the Monday Club.

**Presbyterian Women :** This group meets monthly during the autumn and winter for a programme designed to stimulate interest in and support for the mission of the Church at home and overseas, so many of their guest speakers will represent such work. Members also enjoy day trips to places of interest.

**Girls' Brigade Company :** This Christian organisation meets each Tuesday evening in several sections catering for girls, ages 3-18. They carry out a varied programme as devised by the central GB organisation.

**Guide Company :** The various sections of the Guides meet on a Thursday evening. They are registered separately with the Charity Commission and will submit their own report.

**Alcoholics Anonymous Group :** While this organisation is not under the oversight of our congregation, we are glad to accommodate this local group in our Halls each Wednesday evening.

**Youth Group :** This group, for children of secondary school age, was formed in the second half of 2023 mainly due to the number of children moving into this age bracket and also because the young people themselves really wanted a Christian fellowship group which they could call their own. This group meets in our Community Project building where they can make use of the various facilities such as table tennis, pool and the kitchen but they primarily meet to read the Bible and discuss what they have learned. They also had a fun trip to a local activities centre. It is hoped that this group will expand in both number and in its features in the coming year.

#### **Volunteers**

The Trustees acknowledge with gratitude the invaluable service given by those members of the congregation who lead with great dedication the range of activities described in this report.

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**The Church Plant at Carlisle Circus**

Our Church plant, Grace and Hope, continues to go from strength to strength. As mentioned in our 2022 report, the congregation had grown and required a larger space with provision for a creche and hoped to be able to move into the larger facilities in the neighbouring Hopelink Centre. This became a reality in 2023 and has made worship more practical and comfortable for everyone involved.

Numbers attending worship during 2023 have remained steady. As in 2022, a large portion of the congregation is made up of people from lots of different nationalities. Many of these people have been forced out of their own countries and have ended up in Northern Ireland. There is also, however, an increase in the number of local people who are interested in, or attending Grace and Hope. Two babies, from families who are church members, were baptised in 2023 which shows that the Church is literally growing from within.

In 2023 the leadership of Grace and Hope has began running the Alpha course for Church members or any local people who may wish to attend. They are also running weekly Bible studies for those who are more advanced in their Christian life. They regularly have Church lunches which helps to bring the congregation together socially.

2023 has been a year of growth and consolidation for Grace and Hope. The leadership of the Church plan, with God's help, to build on this solid foundation in 2024 by adding more activities both Spiritual and physical to further enhance Church life and attract new members.

In the near future the North Belfast Presbytery will be looking at Grace and Hope in detail to ascertain how this Church can move forward, possibly as a stand-alone Church in its own right. This is a very real possibility if it continues to grow at it's current rate.

**PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT**

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland meets the public benefit requirement by providing benefit to its members and the general public by making known the Christian Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ through the advancement of religion.

The direct benefits which flow from the purposes of the Church include the gaining of an understanding in Christian beliefs as set out in the Bible and in the Church's subordinate standards (the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Shorter and Larger Catechisms) leading to spiritual and moral development and opportunities for response to Bible teaching. In turn, this framework leads to practical expressions of Christian beliefs and standards in the local community such as through the care of those in need (including the sick, disabled and bereaved).

Generally the above benefits are delivered locally by congregations and their members, or are facilitated through Presbyteries or are organised and delivered centrally. Local delivery is facilitated by central resources in almost all cases. Public access is made known through the use of notice boards, printed material, press advertisement, websites, and social media or in other ways.

The benefits are demonstrated through regular evaluation of the services and informal and ad-hoc feedback from members, their families, and members of the public.

The purpose does not lead to harm. The only private benefit flowing from our purpose is related to Ministers, Missionaries, Deaconesses, Irish Mission workers and Lay Agents who receive benefits as a result of their holding office or employment. However, this is incidental and necessary in order to further our charitable purpose. There are no other private benefits. The beneficiaries of this purpose are members, their families, other individuals that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is in direct and indirect contact with, the community in which pastoral services are provided and other communities throughout Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and worldwide which benefit from our engagement with and support for both Christian and other secular organisations, charities and individual members of the public.

The Kirk Session has had regard to the Charity Commissions Public Benefit requirement statutory guidance.

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**FINANCIAL REVIEW**

The congregation's main source of income is members' contributions through the Weekly Freewill Offering ; and in recent years members have been encouraged to donate directly to the Church's bank account using a Direct Payment scheme.

There were 98 contributing families during the year [113 in previous year, 2022] donating a total of £69,001 (£69,927 in previous year, 2022). In addition, an amount of £12,291 was received in respect of the Grace and Hope church plant (£9,147 in 2022).

Total Receipts of the congregation during the year were £150,282, compared to £316,449 in the previous year which had included £177,613 from the bank account of Crumlin Road Presbyterian Church following it's amalgamation with West Kirk.

A final balance of £2,553 was transferred to close the ROC Bank Account.

Total expenditure decreased from £215,507 to £177,343, mainly because we repaid a loan of £48,253 in respect of our Assistant Minister's salary, once the Crumlin Road funds became available, in 2022.

In addition, the rising costs of heating oil and electricity added to our expenditure, along with further necessary repairs to the upkeep of the Manse and Crumlin Road premises.

**STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES**

The purpose of this statement is to distinguish the Trustees' responsibilities for the accounts from those of the Independent Examiners as stated in their Report.

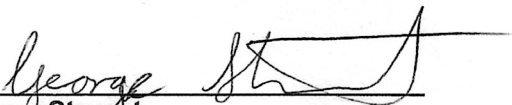
The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements of the congregation in accordance with applicable law and generally accepted accounting practice.

As the congregation's total income does not exceed £250,000, the Trustees have elected under Section 64(3) of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 to prepare a Receipts and Payments Account and a Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

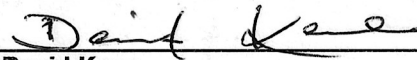
The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the congregation's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time its financial position.

They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the congregation, and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Signed to signify approval on behalf of the Kirk Session , by :



**Mr George Stewart**  
Trustee & Clerk of Session



**Mr David Kane**  
Trustee

20th. February 2024

Date

20th. February 2024

Date