

**COOKE CENTENARY CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH IN IRELAND**

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

**Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC104311)**

**COOKE CENTENARY CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND  
TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT**

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**

Cooke Centenary congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
216 Ormeau Road, Belfast BT7 2FY

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC104311)

**CHARITY TRUSTEES**

The Charity Trustees who served during the year or who were trustees at the date of this report were -

Mrs A Allen	Mr D McWilliams
Mrs S Bennis	Mrs P McWilliams
Mrs H Brunt	Mrs C Reynolds
Mrs P Emerson	Mr M Riddel
Mr H Glenn	Mr K Savage
Mrs J Glenn	Mrs C Smith
Rev D Gray	Mrs B Taylor
Dr C Hetherington	Mr A Wilson
Mrs E MacNeill	Mrs M Wisoner
Miss J McKnight	

**PRINCIPAL OFFICE BEARERS**

Minister	Rev David Gray
Clerk of Session	Mrs Elaine MacNeill
Treasurer	Mr Keith Savage

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER**

**Mr Mark McGinley**  
**80 Upper Dunmurry Lane**  
**Belfast BT17 0PS**

**BANKERS**

**Ulster Bank**  
**365-369 Ormeau Road**  
**Belfast. Co Antrim. BT7 3GP**

**COOKE CENTENARY CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND  
TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (cont'd)**

**SOLICITORS**

**King & Gowdy  
298 Upper Newtownards Rd,  
Belfast BT4 3EJ**

**STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT**

**The Kirk Session**

The charity trustees of the congregation are the members of its 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 not connected with any congregation who are 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 Sessions 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 ex-officio members of the Congregational Committee.

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

Nine stated meetings of the Kirk session and 6 stated meetings of the Congregational Committee were held during 2023. There was also 1 meeting of Voting members of the Congregation.

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. Members are elected if they obtain two-thirds of those who vote.

**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

## **COOKE CENTENARY CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (cont'd)**

and temporal affairs of the congregations assigned to it by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Cooke Centenary congregation of the Presbyterian Church has been assigned to the South 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 an elder appointed by the Kirk Session of the congregation.

### **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, administration 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.

Cooke Centenary congregation of the Presbyterian Church 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 congregation's mission purposes is by the grace of God to help people of all ages become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ and to show God's love to the community of Ballynafeigh.*

*Our vision is, by the grace of God, to sustain and extend the Christian witness of Cooke in this community which is home to people from a diverse range of Christian denominations, other Religions, and those with no active faith, and to be an inclusive, welcoming community of Christ's people of all ages, which:*

- *is increasingly characterised by love for God, and love and concern for others;*
- *is committed to the historic Christian gospel as revealed in the Bible;*
- *is relevant to people of this time and place.*

## **COOKE CENTENARY CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (cont'd)**

### **ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES**

The congregation normally meets for worship every Sunday and visitors are welcome to join. The Sacrament of the Lords Supper is observed on several occasions during the year and all those who have been baptised and who have made a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are admitted to the Lord's Supper. The congregation has a wide range of organisations including:

- Little Cooke's & Bible class
- Presbyterian Women
- Model Railway Club
- Worship Group
- EPIC Kid's Club
- Genesis Youth Club
- Crochet Club
- Tots' Café
- Prayer Meetings
- Bible Study Groups

### **ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

#### **Worship and prayer**

The congregation normally meets for worship each Sunday at **11.00am**. Worship is led by musicians and singers who prepare music to lead Sunday morning worship and other special services throughout the year. Services are available online.

Morning worship is followed by an opportunity for the church family to enjoy fellowship together over refreshments and allows time to minister and pray with individuals.

Little Cookes, where children meet to learn of God's love for them in age-appropriate settings, continued each week during morning worship. Little Cooke's is led by a rota of leaders and teenage helpers.

A Bible Class with an average of 14 young people meet with the Minister & other leaders in the Church Manse each Sunday morning at 10am.

The Genesis youth group with an average of 12 young people meet each Sunday evening for a programme of activities, discussion, and prayer.

Two opportunities for congregational prayer are available each week, a virtual meeting is held each Tuesday evening, and an in-person group meet each Thursday morning.

A "Prayer Walking" initiative was launched in March 2023 which encouraged members from Cooke, and the other churches in Ballynafeigh, to pray blessings on the work of the many businesses, café's, schools, community centres etc that are based in the Ballynafeigh area.

## **COOKE CENTENARY CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (cont'd)**

Two Groups meet fortnightly for Bible study on Sunday & Wednesday evenings.

Short, fortnightly services of worship were held with the residents of a local Nursing Home.

At 31 December 2023 there were **148** communicant members and **228** families connected with the congregation. The average weekly attendance at morning worship was **100**.

### **Pastoral care**

We sought to comfort those who had been bereaved during 14 funeral services in 2023.

A Griefshare Course was held between March - June 2023 to provide support and encouragement to anyone touched by bereavement.

Members of the congregation who are unable to attend church due to sickness or age receive visits on a regular basis by the minister, elders, or a member of the congregational committee.

Flowers are delivered each Sunday, and gifts are also delivered at Christmas and Harvest time to members of the congregation who are ill or going through a difficult personal experience, as an expression of the care of their church family.

Quarterly Church magazines are delivered to all members to keep everyone updated with information about church activities.

### **Mission and outreach**

The congregation has several local mission and outreach activities through which the congregation strives to meet some of the needs which have been identified in Ballynafeigh.

Cooke works with care providers, voluntary groups, and neighbouring congregations to support those most in need of help through the provision of food parcels from the Cooke Foodstore. Financial donations, and donations of food items, are provided by members of local congregations. Each food parcel will provide a family with sufficient provisions for several days until a source of regular income is achieved.

During 2023, an average of 10 parcels were prepared each week with donations also being given to support the International Meeting Point, Starling Collective and Women's Aid. Approximately 550 food parcels were provided during the year.

A new initiative was the availability of additional ambient and fresh food produce which was donated each Monday evening by several local large stores. This was displayed and freely

**COOKE CENTENARY CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND  
TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (cont'd)**

available to anyone each Tuesday morning from a “Big Blessing” Table which was positioned just outside Cooke Church on the front of the Ormeau Road. The “Big Blessing” Table has been well received by local residents and it’s visibility, has resulted in additional donations to the Foodstore initiative.

The congregation is actively involved in the work and witness of the Ballynafeigh Clergy Fellowship and Ormeau Churches Together (OCT). The Walk of Witness, which is an OCT initiative, is held each year on Good Friday. A service was held at the gates of the Ormeau Park which was well attended by many from the churches in Ballynafeigh and the wider area. Those attending processed back to Cooke Church for a service of readings, prayers and a time to reflect on the significance of Easter. Refreshments after the service were provided by OCT.

The Church railings were used to display the Easter message and 3 crosses were illuminated from a window in the church steeple to effectively convey an image of events on Good Friday to those passing on the Ormeau Road.

The annual Belfast City Marathon provided an opportunity for Cooke members to take part in this community event by serving refreshments on the Ormeau Road to those who lined the route to support the runners. The church building was available to provide toilet facilities or somewhere to rest or take shelter if required.

In August 2023 during a week-long “Summer Mission” we welcomed 96 primary school age children from the local community who had registered to attend. This was a very positive week with games, stories and craft activities which had no charge for attendance and which was enjoyed by all. Some families are now attending other church activities.

Tot’s Café each Tuesday morning provided a warm and welcoming space for babies and pre-school children and their carers. Numbers of those attending increased each week and we were pleased that they have now returned to pre-Covid levels.

The “EPIC” kid’s group, for primary school aged children continued throughout 2023. Adult leadership is supported by a team of youth from the congregation. An average of 20 children from the community, with no Cooke connection, attended each week to play games, hear a Bible story, do craftwork and enjoy a weekly tuck shop.

The Churches and other community venues in Ballynafeigh continued to work together to provide a warm space each day during the winter months where members of the community could come, have lunch, and enjoy meeting together. Cooke CosyHub was open each Tuesday between 12.30pm and 2pm and provided warm meals for between 30 - 45 between October & March 2024.

## **COOKE CENTENARY CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (cont'd)**

In December 2023 Women's Aid were particularly appreciative of the toys and gifts which were provided by the congregation to share our love and care for the families that they support.

The annual Carol service was augmented by a brass band and was well attended by members from the local community who enjoyed the festive refreshments.

Additional Christmas concerts by the "Ormeau Community Choir", the "Big Belfast Choir" and "Celtish" were also well attended and many from the community were welcomed into the church building to enjoy these evenings of Christmas music.

The annual church pantomime provides an opportunity for family entertainment, and we were pleased that this could be resumed after a 2 year break because of Coronavirus restrictions. The 2023 Cooke production of "Anthony & Cleopatra" was enjoyed and well supported by the congregation and local community.

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 and to do mission and outreach on a denominational basis beyond what the 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, assist with the running costs of Union Theological College, the Church's training college for ministry students, and financially supports congregation in the areas of worship, discipleship, global mission, outreach, leadership and pastoral care.

The congregation also contributes to the denominations annual World Development Appeal and any other special appeals. A retiring offering on Remembrance Sunday benefited the work of the Royal British Legion and a pancake breakfast was held in February 2023 to raise funds to support the appeal for the Turkey / Syria Earthquake. The congregation also provided financial support to 2 youth members who volunteered on overseas mission opportunities.

### **Presbytery**

The congregation was represented at the regular meetings of Presbytery by our minister and one of the elders. This provides an important link between the congregation and the wider structures of the church.

### **General Assembly**

## **COOKE CENTENARY CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (cont'd)**

The minister and one of our elders are nominated to attend the meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland held in Assembly Buildings, Belfast, in June each year.

### **Property**

Routine servicing and maintenance of the lift, fire extinguishers, fire alarm and electrical appliances continued, and other items of repair and replacement were undertaken.

Purpose built lockable cupboards were fitted in a room within the Church Hall to provide appropriate storage for ambient donations to the Cooke Foodstore.

The Church railings which border the Ormeau Road were sanded and repainted by a team of church members over the summer months.

Extensive work was required to expose and replace a split sewer at the back of the church building.

A room within the Church building received modernisation and the addition of soft furnishings to provide a comfortable meeting space for small groups.

The Entertainments Licence for the Church Hall was renewed.

Following the decision at the 2021 General Assembly that Presbytery Education Boards should cease to act as Holding Trustees for congregational properties, a congregational meeting was held and it was agreed, that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Holding Trustee Company should be appointed as the new Trustee for all properties belonging to Cooke Centenary Church.

### **Organisations**

In addition to the activities of the Organisations already detailed, the Cooke Crochet Group, Presbyterian Women, the Model Railway Group and "Brownies", a Guiding Organisation, continued to meet regularly in 2023.

### **Volunteers**

The Trustees wish to acknowledge their deep appreciation of those who give freely of their time by serving on committees and helping with organisations and other church activities.

## **PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT**

**COOKE CENTENARY CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND  
TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (cont'd)**

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 noticeboards, 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.

**FINANCIAL REVIEW**

The congregation's main source of income is members' contributions through the Weekly Freewill Offering, the Property Fund and the Mission Fund together with Gift Aid receipts on contributions. There were 125 contributors during the year. (134 in previous year 2022) donating a total of £122,207 (£109,596 in previous year 2022)

**COOKE CENTENARY CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND  
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Additional income is generated through various fund-raising activities, and from the payment of licence fees by groups who meet in our premises.

Total Income of the congregation during the year was £237,709 compared to £175,489 in the previous year 2022.

Total expenditure increased from £177,166 in 2022 to £210,318 in 2023.

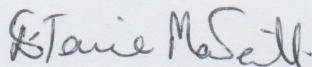
**STATEMENT OF TRUSTEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

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 payment account and a statement of assets and liabilities.

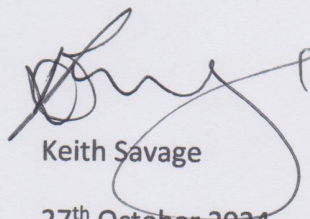
The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the congregation's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time its financial position. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the congregation and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Approved by the Kirk Session at a meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2024 and signed on its behalf by



Elaine MacNeill

27<sup>th</sup> October 2024



Keith Savage

27<sup>th</sup> October 2024