

Strand Presbyterian Church - a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Trustees Annual Report

for the year ended 31 December 2025

Registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC104314

Strand Presbyterian Church

161 Connsbrook Avenue

Belfast

BT5 1JY

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CHARITY TRUSTEES

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

Rev Alan Marsh	*George Hampton	John Johnston
Patricia Cooper	Suzanne Howe	*Susan Lilley
Robert Megahey	Graeme Hamilton	Harry Black
Martin Hampton	David Doggart	
Rev Mervyn Burnside		

*Retired or resigned during the year

PRINCIPAL OFFICE BEARERS

Vacancy Convenor	Rev Mervyn Burnside (May 2024 – June 2025)
Minister	Rev Alan Marsh (June 2025 & current)
Clerk of Session	John Johnston
Treasurer	Martin Hampton

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Barbara Elaine Dempster

SOLICITORS

Peden & Reid
22 Calendar St
Belfast
BT1 5BU

BANKERS

Ulster Bank Ltd
Connswater Branch
Arches Retail Park
Belfast BT5 4AF

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 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 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 minister in active duty in the congregation, has no deliberative but only a casting vote.

Stated meetings of the Kirk Session are usually held on a monthly basis.

To be chosen for the office of the eldership in the congregation a person must be a voting member and a regular attendant of its ordinances. The selection of those proposed to be called to the office can be either by the congregation or the Kirk Session. Members are elected if they obtain two-thirds of votes cast.

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. Strand Presbyterian Church has been assigned to the East Belfast Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The membership of the Presbytery consists mainly of 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, administrative and judicial authority, in dealing with 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 the 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

Strand 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.

At Strand, our desire is to see *'Maturing Disciples, Making Disciples'*

The congregation aims to live out this calling as a family of God's people through the following areas of church life:

> ***Worship & Prayer*** *– looking to the Lord in faith and repentance, and receiving Grace and Mercy.*
>
> ***Discipleship*** *– to grow together in community in the Grace and knowledge of God*
>
> ***Evangelism*** *– to reach out actively and seek to draw others to discover the hope we have found in Christ.*
>
> ***Fellowship & Pastoral care*** *– to provide a supportive and caring ministry to one another;*

ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

The congregation meets for Sunday Morning Worship at 1030 and all are welcome in the name of Jesus. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is observed on several occasions throughout 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 holds gatherings in addition to Sunday Morning Worship, as described on page 10

In addition, to our weekly activities and ministries, we provide access to our halls for outside groups to use on a weekly basis:

These include:

- Breakfast Club and After Schools Care
- Mixed Fitness and HIIT Classes

Several local charities and organisations also make use of our facilities on an ad hoc basis:

- Barnardos
- Eastside Partnership
- Queen's Island Male Voice Choir
- Angel Eyes
- Latin Link
- Lace Guild
- Belfast Health & Social Care Trust
- Belfast City Council
- Holywood Arches Health Centre

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

During 2025, the people of Strand continue to thank the Lord, for his provision and we have acknowledged God's gift of new life through the sacrament of Baptism, and welcoming members to share in the Lords Supper.

As his people, we have strived to reach out and share his love with our neighbours in Sydenham. This past year, we have had the opportunity to comfort those within our community, who have been bereaved during the year, as we again, give thanks for his gift of life.

At 31st December 2025, there were 79 communicant members and 108 families connected with the congregation.

The average weekly attendance at morning worship sits at around is 60-65.

Rev Alan Marsh was installed on 27th June 2025

Pastoral Care

Members of the congregation who are unable to attend church due to illness or age are visited on a regular basis by the minister and elders.

Mission and Outreach

During 2025, we welcomed our neighbours in Sydenham through our doors at two Outreach Events, namely our Summer Family Fun Day, and a Christmas Fayre. These both provided opportunities to reach out, and draw in our neighbours, to hear of the love of the Lord. From these events, we have seen families connect into ministries of the Church, especially BB and Supper Club.

At Christmas, a large group of Strand Members, went out 'door to door' inviting our neighbours to our Christmas Outreach, and Sunday Morning Worship.

A few members of the Church, have been considering a new way to reach out to young children in the area, and are considering the possibilities of running an Easter Holiday Bible Club in 2026.

All of our Ministries and activities seek to fulfil a calling to both *Mature* Disciples of Jesus, and in Mission & Outreach – to *Make* Disciples of Jesus.

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, assists with the running costs of Union Theological College, the Church's training college for ministry students, and financially supports congregations in the area of worship, discipleship, global mission, outreach, leadership and pastoral care.

The Congregation is represented on the Boards of several schools in the local area:

- Victoria Park Primary School
- Strandtown Primary School
- Ashfield Boys School
- Ashfield Girls School

In addition, The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has launched appeals to help with world crises, such as hurricane damage, tsunami damage etc... The congregation contributes financially to these appeals as and when called upon.

Presbytery

The congregation was represented at the regular meetings of Presbytery by our minister and one of the elders. In addition, one of our elders is an official for the Presbytery and also attends the meetings.

General Assembly

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

In addition, one of the members is an official of the General Assembly and attends independently from the congregation

Property

General upkeep of the church and Manse continue throughout the year. Regular scheduled maintenance of the fire alarm and the fire safety systems, and of the gas heating system has been completed.

With the expectation of a new family in the manse, work continued on the property per the surveys carried out in 2024 and the family moved in at the start of July.

Administration

We continue to maintain our church records using *Churchsuite*, a cloud hosted web-based church management system (https://churchsuite.com/) to keep track of our membership and record direct donations from members, utilising its Gift Aid claim

facility direct to HMRC. Churchsuite assists us in adherence to GDPR, as a single source of membership data.

Organisations

These Ministries and Activities have been operating in 2025.

STRAND KIDS

Meeting during Sunday Morning Worship for Children under 11, and providing an opportunity to discover the love of the Lord, through stories, crafts and singing. Babies and toddlers are also welcome, and facilitated for at Strand Kids

WELCOME CAFÉ

Meeting weekly on Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays, this is a safe space for the people of Sydenham to find friendship, and for those in the Church, to reach out through practical love and service.

BADMINTON CLUB

Meeting on Tuesday Evenings, a place of friendship and fitness!

COMMUNITY 123 LUNCH

On a monthly basis, we host a Community Lunch at Strand. Our desire is to see this initiative increasingly used by our Church, to invite friends and neighbours, to meet together over a meal.

HOPE CLUB

Meeting twice monthly on Wednesday afternoon. We alternate our meetings with Interactive Bible studies, and guest speakers. Over the years, Hope Club has provided a great comfort to many older members of Strand, and our neighbours.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT FELLOWSHIP

Meeting on Wednesday evenings, we model this time around the example of Acts 2v42. We gather weekly to fellowship together, to eat, to read the Bible, and to pray for one another, and our neighbours.

STRAND TODDLERS

Meeting weekly during term time on Thursday Mornings, this a safe space for local carers, families and children to gather. Alongside the practical provision of games, toys, songs and snacks to the children, Adults are supported by members of the leadership team, who provide refreshments, a listening ear, and words of encouragement. Our desire is to show and share practically, the love of the Lord, to our neighbours.

BOYS' BRIGADE

Meeting weekly during term time on Thursday Evenings, all young boys under 11 are welcomed into our BB. Each week, the boys engage in games, crafts, Bible stories, and much more! It has been encouraging to see older boys (aged 11-18) seek to serve as helpers, and we are prayerfully anticipating an opportunity to reopen up the Company Section within Strand DV.

SUPPER CLUB

Running alongside the BB, a new initiative that has begun this year, where parents and siblings of the boys gather in the café in Strand, during BB. This has provided us an opportunity to reach out to local parents, and to pray with, and for them. It has been encouraging to see these relationships grow and deepen, with some who were previously 'disconnected' now attending Sunday Morning Worship.

YOUTH MINISTRY

It has also been encouraging to see teenagers reengage, and participate in Sunday Morning Worship. As of December 2025, along with a group of Church Leaders, they have begun meeting, with the intention of launching a new ministry among those aged 11+ in January 2026.

MENS FELLOWSHIP

This is a space for Men within Strand to meet monthly – to Mature as disciples of Jesus, and to Make disciples, among our friends that do not yet trust in the Lord. During 2025, we have taken opportunities to encourage one another, through nights in, and trips out. One highlight, was when the Men led a special Sunday Morning service. It has been encouraging to see a larger number of younger men join this year.

WOMENS FELLOWSHIP

During 2025, a group of Women have begun meeting for fellowship and friendship. It is hoped that this could develop into a community for women within the Church, to encourage one another to mature in their faith.

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 it the Bible and in the Church's subordinate standards (the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Shorter & 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 local resources in almost all cases. Public access is made known through the use of noticeboards, printed material, 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 Commission's Public Benefit Requirement statutory guidance.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The congregation's main source of income is members' contributions through the Weekly Freewill Offering (WFO). There were 76 contributors during the year (79 in previous year, 2024), donating a total amount of £68,809 (£65,145 in previous year, 2024).

Total income of the congregation during the year was £113,242; compared to £123,962 in the previous year.

Total Expenditure was £165,403, compared with £98,831 in the previous year (2024). The increase is attributed to the work carried out on the Manse, in anticipation of a new family moving in.

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 and signed on its behalf by

Rev Alan Marsh
Minister

Date: 29 September 2026

John Johnston
Clerk of Session

Date: 29 September 2026