

ABBOTS CROSS CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND

Trustees Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC104364)

ABBOTS CROSS 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

Abbots Cross congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

91 Doagh Road

Newtownabbey

Co Antrim

BT37 9QN

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC104364)

CHARITY TRUSTEES

The Charity Trustees who served during the year were:

Mr Gary Anderson

Mr Matthew Bunting

Mr Dean Gordon

Mr Thomas Hazley

Mr Maurice James McClay

Mr Thomas McWatters

Mr Gary O'Rourke

Mr Michael Rutledge

Mr Ronald Wilson

PRINCIPAL OFFICE BEARERS

Minister Rev Michael Rutledge

Clerk of Session Mr Gary O'Rourke

Treasurer(s) Mr John Henry

 Mrs Cherith Fittis

ABBOTS CROSS CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (continued)

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Mr Roy Eakin
18 Farm Lodge Road
Greenisland
Carrickfergus
Co. Antrim
BT38 8XH

BANKERS

Ulster Bank Limited
2 Farmley Road
Glengormley
BT36 7QU

SOLICITORS

Reavey & Company
22 The Diamond
Rathcoole
Newtownabbey
BT37 9BJ

ABBOTS CROSS CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (continued)

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 congregations. 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.

Stated meetings of the Kirk session are held at least eight times a year.

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 and temporal affairs of the congregations assigned to it by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Abbots Cross 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 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.

ABBOTS CROSS CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (continued)

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

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

Abbots Cross 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 congregations mission purpose is 'Know Jesus through his teaching, Show Jesus in how we live, and Go for Jesus into the world.

At Abbots Cross we believe we are called to share the love of Jesus in word and deed with those who don't yet know Him. We're also called to support, encourage and equip those who are followers of Jesus. We organise ourselves to best facilitate this. At Abbots Cross we believe in the Mission of God. We believe that we are called to be missional disciples of Christ who live out our faith on our everyday 'Frontlines'. As we do so we participate with God as He works, drawing people to Himself. We believe this to be a fundamental and very exciting part of who we are.

In addition to equipping our members we seek to engage with those on our doorstep, in the local community and around the world, irrespective of their beliefs or ethnic origins.

ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

The congregation meets for worship every Sunday morning. Evening services take place every 2 weeks. Visitors are welcome to join. During the week the house groups and discipleship groups provide an opportunity for members to meet for fellowship, to study the scriptures and have a time of prayer. Prayer is an important aspect of congregational life with a formal prayer meeting held at least once a month, a prayer and praise meeting held at least once a month and home prayer groups also meeting monthly. 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:

- Bowling Club
- Childrens Church
- Cuppa and Chat
- Discipleship Groups
- FM Club – Special Needs
- Foodbank
- Friendship and Craft Class
- Girls Brigade
- House groups
- Junior youth club
- Table Tennis Club
- Women's Ministry
- Youth Fellowship

2023 saw two new organisations begin/ recommence:

- Globalink – This ministry started in August 2023 and is a conversation café used to meet new people, practise English, share your culture and learn about Jesus.
- Men’s Ministry – This recommenced in November 2023, having not met for a number of years due to Covid restrictions, and is aimed at bringing together men from all generations across the congregation to have fellowship and grow in their faith. The first event had 32 men present.

ABBOTS CROSS CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (continued)

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Response to COVID-19

UK Covid 19 restrictions were relaxed in February 2022. The Presbyterian church adopted the relaxation in April 2022. ACPC sought to reestablish face to face meetings while facilitating remote fellowship via live streaming of services and continuing to utilise WhatsApp prayer. Whilst there were no restrictions in place for 2023 some knock on effects were felt as people continued to be wary of larger gatherings.

Membership

At 31 December 2023 there were 173 Communicant members (2022 – 169, 2021 – 161).

The weekly attendance, at morning worship was approximately 173 (2022 – 165, 2021 – 140), as tested by a random head count.

Mission and outreach

At a local level the congregation has a Mission Plan and supports a number of external missions and agencies through prayer and donations. Total donations to missions in 2023 were approximately £32,516 (2022 - £30,768, 2021 - £18,865).

In 2023 the church contributed approximately 4,500kgs (2022 – 5,000kgs, 2021 – 4,000kgs) of food to Newtownabbey FoodBank.

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 European Christian Mission, Feba Radio, Open Doors, Tear Fund as well as to special appeals. In 2023 £3,308 was donated to a special Biblica appeal for Ukrainian Bibles.

Presbytery

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

ABBOTS CROSS CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (continued)

General Assembly

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

Organisations

The church buildings are used extensively during the week by a wide range of organisations for all generations.

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

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 using noticeboards, printed material, press advertisement, websites, and social media or in other ways.

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.

ABBOTS CROSS CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (continued)

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The congregation's main source of income is members' contributions through the Weekly Freewill Offering. There were 165 contributing families during the year (2022 – 162, 2021 – 171). Donations totalled £98,306 (2022 - £95,562, 2021 - £91,333).

Total Income of the congregation during the year was £197,301 (2022 - £204,350, 2021 - £188,784).

Total expenditure was £188,057 (2022 - £179,640, 2021 - £141,289).

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.

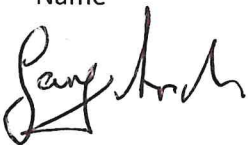
As the congregation's total income does not exceed £250,000, the Trustees have elected under Section 64(3) of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) to prepare a receipts and payment account and a statement of assets and liabilities.

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 May 14th, 2024, and signed on its behalf by

Name

Date



14-05-2024.