

*SINCLAIR SEAMEN'S
CONGREGATION OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND*

*Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements
For the year ended 31st December 2023*

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC104375)

**SINCLAIR SEAMEN'S CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND
TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT**

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

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

*Sinclair Seamen's congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Corporation Square Belfast BT1 3AJ
Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC104375)*

CHARITY TRUSTEES

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

*Mr William Johnston
Mr Samuel John Heading
Mr Aaron Duff
Mr William Greer
Rev Dr William Parker*

PRINCIPAL OFFICE BEARERS

*Minister
Clerk of Session
Treasurer*

*Rev Dr William Parker
Mr William Johnston
Mr David Carlisle*

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Mr Roy Eakin

BANKERS

Ulster Bank, York Road, Belfast

CHURCH SOLICITORS

Hewitt & Gilpin, Hollywood Road, Belfast

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 held at least seven times in each year or when required.

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 the votes cast.

On 23rd July 2022 the congregation was saddened by the death of Mr William Chambers, an esteemed ruling elder, former Clerk of Session, and trustee of Sinclair Seamen's.

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. Sinclair Seamen's congregation has been assigned to the North Belfast Presbytery. 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 each 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 annually for a number of days 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.

Sinclair Seamen's 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 the world.

As part of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the congregation at Sinclair Seamen's believes that the Bible, God's Word, is the supreme authority over all we do.

The congregation's mission/purpose statement is *Anchored in the Word. Gathering for Worship. Scattering to Serve. Being Disciples. Making Disciples* and this is based around what Jesus Christ, the sole Head of the Church, said were the two greatest commandments and what He gave as the one great commission.

The Two Greatest Commandments

*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ...
"Love your neighbour as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. (Matthew 22:37-40)*

The One Great Commission

*"... go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you ..."
(Matthew 28:19-20)*

In light of these significant words, Sinclair Seamen's mission and purpose is to bring glory to God by being anchored in God's Word, gathering to worship, scattering to serve, being disciples, and making disciples.

Anchored in God's Word

The Bible is the standard by which we live our lives.

Gathering to Worship

At Sinclair Seamen's our main gatherings for worship take place on Sundays. Our worship is regulated by how God prescribes He is to be worshipped in the Bible.

Scattering to Serve

After gathering on the Lord's Day (Sunday) we then scatter to where God has placed us, in His Divine providence, in order to serve Him in our daily lives by loving Him and loving all other people.

Being Disciples

We serve Him by placing ourselves under the discipline of the Lord Jesus' teaching, which is found in the Bible, and so, by God's grace, live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ wherever we are.

Making Disciples

We seek to obey the command of the Lord Jesus Christ to make disciples so that people of all ages may become His fully devoted followers.

ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

The congregation normally meets for worship every Sunday and visitors are made most welcome. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is normally observed on at least five occasions during the year and all those who have made credible profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are invited to partake. In addition to its weekly acts of public worship the congregation normally has a range of other activities including:

Midweek fellowship for Bible study, discussion and prayer

Sunday School

Presbyterian Women

Weekly Prayer Meeting

Occasional Choir

Occasional Praise Group

Our historic Church Building opens each week (or by arrangement) for visitors and tours

Outreach to young people who use Belfast Urban Sports Park close to the Church Building

iCafé for international students studying at the nearby university campus.

Annual Summer Bible Club for pre-school and primary school age children

Annual Christmas Bible Club for pre-school and primary school age children

Participation in the annual European Heritage Open days

Participation in the annual Maritime Festival

Participation in other community events as appropriate

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023

Worship and Prayer

The congregation meets for worship twice each Sunday - at 11:00am in the Church building and at 6:30pm in the Lower Hall of our Church Hall complex. On Sunday mornings throughout 2023 as we worshipped God, we completed an exposition of the book of the Acts of the Apostles then began an exposition of the book of Romans. On Sunday evenings, in a less formal setting, we worshipped God and finished our exposition of the book of Philippians before beginning an exposition of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5-7). During the summer months, and taking a break from the book of Philippians, we worked through Mark chapter 1 verses 1-34 in both morning and evening worship, dealing with topics such as Baptism and Filling of the Holy Spirit, Demon Possession, Divine Healing. On Sunday evenings opportunity is given to the congregation to discuss the exposition of God's Word after the sermon just prior to a time of open prayer.

At 31st December 2023 there were 45 communicant members and 195 families connected to the congregation. The average weekly attendance at morning worship was around 40 people and attendance at evening worship averaged around 14 persons.

On Sunday mornings during 2023 when we gathered for worship, on occasions the praise group helped lead the congregation in worship. We are grateful to Mr Jonathan Burnside who, on occasion, helped us in morning worship by playing the church organ in the absence of our organist, Mrs Esther Parker, who was fulfilling speaking engagements in her role as Presbyterian Women President.

Midweek Meetings

Meeting in our Lower hall, the first part of the year was given over to completing our series *Will Build My Church – Twenty Centuries of Church History and Counting*. Then, as part of rolling out our Navigating Our Way (NOW) strategy (see below), we undertook the four-week add-on optional course on *The Peacemaking Church*. [We had worked through the core course in 2022.] Sixteen people enrolled for the course and it concluded with our last midweek of the Church year on 4th May. Following the summer recess, midweeks recommenced in October 2023 and we began a study of the book of Job. This study took the format of a DVD presentation followed by discussion and working through accompanying study material. An average of 13 people attended our midweek services.

2023 Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The congregation held its AGM on Thursday 28th September 2023 in the Lower Hall. The first half of the evening was given over to formal reports by Mr Bill Johnston (Clerk of Session), Mr David Carlisle (Treasurer), and Rev Dr Bill Parker (Minister). The church accounts were accepted by those attending after they were explained, proposed and seconded. The second half of the evening consisted of having some savoury snacks followed by a table quiz and a Beetle Drive. All in attendance had a very enjoyable evening.

Pastoral care

Routine general pastoral visitation of members and adherents of the congregation took place throughout 2023. It is the Minister's aim to visit every family in the congregation at least once during the year, in addition to any necessary reactionary pastoral care. Members of the Kirk Session, the Church Committee, and congregation, also provided general and reactionary pastoral support through telephone calls and/or pastoral visits.

Mission and Outreach

Uganda (Waakisa). Two members of the congregation travelled to Uganda in November 2023 to serve with Waakisa Ministries, an organisation that seeks to provide care and support to young, vulnerable women who are pregnant and alone, and that delivers health education programmes to local schools and churches in Uganda. This was the first time this ministry was able to be undertaken since Covid restrictions were lifted.

Child Evangelism Fellowship of Ireland (CEF). One young person from our fellowship was a leader in a Summer Camp organised by CEF.

Belfast City Council Bridges Urban Sports Park. Weekly outreach to the Belfast City Council-operated Bridges Urban Sports Park carried on with its normal pattern. The Minister and another member of the congregation continued to forge relationships with the young people by spending time with them in the Sports Park, normally each Saturday afternoon. Numbers attending the Urban Sports Park have declined as a result of the opening of 'Skate 100 @ V36', a new 14,000 square foot, £750,000 EU peace funded urban sports facility at the Valley Leisure Centre, Newtownabbey, in May 2022. However, sufficient numbers still make use of 'Bridges' to justify our regular ministry.

Summer Outreach. The Minister and a member of the congregation were well received in door-to-door visitation, in Pilot Street, Princess Dock Street, and Short Street, to inform parents and children of a planned open-air 4-Day Club for pre-school and primary school aged children, from 3rd – 6th July 2023. The first night of the club took place in Barrow Square, a paved performance area close to our Church premises. However, because of rain on the following two nights the club was conducted in a replica tram shelter in Princess Dock Street. The final night of the club, when we enjoyed hot dogs and other snacks, was held across the street from the tram shelter in St Joseph's Community Centre, kindly granted. A total of fourteen children attended the club, some accompanied by a parent.

Christmas Outreach. In December 2023, and as a follow-up to our summer 4-Day Club, we held a one-off Christmas Club in St Joseph's, the deconsecrated Chapel that is now a community centre, in Princess Dock Street. Once again, the Minister and another member of the congregation were well received in door-to-door visitation, in Pilot Street, Princess Dock Street, and Short Street, to inform parents and children of this event, and fifteen children and young people turned up on the night, along with two parents. A team of five from Sinclair's, together with the Child Evangelism Fellowship of Ireland Local Director, conducted the club. Each child went home with a 'goody' bag.

iCafé. We continue to have a close association with iCafé, a weekly ministry to international students studying at Ulster University, Belfast campus. After initially meeting weekly in our Lower Hall, the Christian Union Committee decided to mainly relocate to social space in the main campus building, and use our halls on occasion. The Minister visits iCafé weekly in order to maintain regular contact with the students and to build relationships. The iCafé evenings that took place in our Lower Hall were well-attended, one of which was a Christmas dinner in December 2023 when thirty plus students enjoyed a traditional Christmas meal. We are thankful to God that iCafé ministry continues to enable us as a congregation to reach out to students in the Cathedral Quarter and we look forward to developing this ministry in the future.

University of Ulster Belfast Campus Christian Union. The Minister was invited, as a result of developing relationships mainly through iCafé ministry, to speak at two events in 2023: a

regular Thursday night meeting of the Christian Union and at a student lunch organised by the Christian Union Evangelism Committee.

“The Captain’s Galley” Student Lunches. After consulting the Queen’s University Presbyterian Chaplain, and others including some students, about what might be effective ministry to engage with university students, we decided to begin a monthly free student lunch served in our Lower Hall. The first “Captain’s Galley”, a title based on a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ in Hebrews chapter 2 verse 10, was held in November and was followed up with another one in December. Publicity material was designed by a graphics designer student from the Ulster University Belfast campus Christian Union. We hope to continue to develop this ministry.

Review of Tenure. The tenure of Sinclair Seamen’s Presbyterian Church was due for review in 2022 but the Covid-19 pandemic pushed the review back. In December 2022 North Belfast Presbytery appointed a panel to conduct a review throughout 2023. The panel brought a very encouraging & supportive report to North Belfast Presbytery in November 2023, which Presbytery enthusiastically embraced and supported. The report was then forwarded to the Linkage Commission and we await their decisions.

Organisations and Facilities

Volunteers. The Trustees wish to acknowledge their deep appreciation of those who give freely of their time by serving on committees, helping with organisations and other church activities, show pastoral concern for members of the congregation, and generally, do what needs to be done in connection with our fellowship.

Presbyterian Women (PW). The Presbyterian Women group met on eight occasions in 2023. Meetings were varied, some using themed resources provided for groups, some addressed by outside speakers, some including practical activities, all aiming to build one another up in our faith and to build relationships. Average attendance was 17. The group, along with the rest of the congregation, continued to prayerfully support the group leader, Mrs Esther Parker, as she completed her year (22/23) as President of Presbyterian Women. Mrs Parker and two others represent the group at the PW Presbytery LINK where Mrs Parker is also part of the organising group.

The WhatsApp group **SNAP** (Sinclair’s News And Prayer), comprising 25 persons, continues to be an invaluable means of keeping in touch, sharing items of news, praise, and sharing items for prayer.

X. The Church X (formerly Twitter) account *@SinclairsChurch* has 120 followers and continues to be a means of informing the wider community of church services, church events and news in general concerning the congregation.

Church website. *www.sinclairschurch.co.uk* also continues to operate for regular church services updates, announcements and contact points. Links to the 65 weekly recorded services that were uploaded to YouTube in 2020 and 2021, and that are on Sinclair's YouTube channel, *Sinclair's Church*, are still available on the home page of the Church website and folk are encouraged to revisit them or watch them for the first time. The number of views continues to increase.

Donations. The congregation continues to be generous in supporting the wider work of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland together with other missionary organisations and charities – the United Appeal of the Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Women (PW) Mission Fund, Open Doors, Tear Fund, Earl Haig Fund, Northern Ireland Hospice, and Christmas gifts to the elderly and families within our parish. The United Appeal, a central fund of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 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 Deaconesses) and financially supports congregations in the areas of worship, discipleship, global mission, outreach, leadership and pastoral care. The congregation also contributes to the denomination's annual World Development Appeal, Sunday School project and other special appeals.

Presbytery

The congregation was represented at the seven meetings of North Belfast Presbytery in 2023 – 7th February, 7th March, 2nd May, 5th September, 3rd October, 7th November, and 5th December – by its Minister, Rev Dr Parker and one of its ruling elders, Mr Bill Johnston, the Clerk of Session. Presbytery provides an important link between the congregation and the wider structures of the church.

General Assembly

The 2023 annual General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland took place in Assembly Buildings, Belfast from Wednesday 21st June until Saturday 24th June. The Minister, Rev Dr Bill Parker, attended a number of sessions, as did our nominated representative elder, Mr Billy Greer.

Property

The Church property has been regularly maintained.

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 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. (FWO). There were 99 contributors during the year [101 in previous year, 2023 donating a total of £39,967 [decrease of £1,724 on the previous year, 2022 (£41,691). Total Income of the congregation during the year was £78,295 + £127,242 bringing the total income to £205,537 compared to £79,145, in the previous year 2022. Total expenditure increased from £66,724 to £69,189

Bequests

The Sum of £127,241.73 was received from the Estate of the Late May Armstrong

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 Tuesday 23rd January 2024 and signed on its behalf by

Signed: *W Green*

Date: 23rd January 2024

Signed: *A Duff*

Date: 23rd January 2024