

**GARDENMORE CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND.
TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT**

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

Stated meetings of the Kirk Session are held nine times each year or as appropriate.

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. Gardenmore Presbyterian Church has been assigned to the Carrickfergus 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 each congregation.

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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, 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. In a change to the traditional format of recent General Assemblies, it met for three days with the necessary Covid mitigations in place from the Wednesday 21st to the Saturday 24th June. 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

Gardenmore 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 Statement is

to bring people to know Jesus as Saviour,
to maintain a worshipping, caring fellowship,
to encourage people to mature in Christlikeness,
to equip people for ministry in the church and outreach to others,
and to glorify God in all things.

(Strap line *Worshipping Jesus – Following Jesus – Sharing Jesus*)

The congregation aims to live out its Mission and Vision as a family of God's people by being:

- *A Covenant Community: where our relationships are rooted in the promises of God by living faithfully toward him and toward one another*
- *An Intergenerational Community: where adults intentionally take the lead to engage with, encourage and nurture younger members to maturity in Christ.*
- *An Outward looking Community: where we want the blessings of God that belong to us in the gospel to become blessings for others beyond the bounds of our community.*
- *As a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, we believe that the Bible is the supreme authority over all we do, and that the Westminster Confession of Faith, along with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms set out what we understand the Bible teaches on key matters of Christian faith and practice.*

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ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

The congregation meets for worship every Sunday and visitors are welcome to join. Tea and coffee is served in church following the service to facilitate fellowship. The Sacrament of the Lords Supper is usually observed on five 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 holds regular bible study meetings and has a wide range of organisations including

- Sunday School
- Sunday Club for children with learning difficulties
- Crèche
- Youth Club
- Parents and Toddlers
- Indoor Bowling Club
- Presbyterian Women
- Men's Fellowship
- Busy Hands Craft Group
- Girls Brigade
- THRIVE (Youth Fellowship)
- Friends Together (fellowship)
- Home group Bible study
- Monthly Women's breakfast (commenced January 2023)

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Worship and prayer

The congregation met on Sunday at 11.00 am and 6.30pm. Morning services were live-streamed on You Tube and some church members received CD recordings of the services. Monthly Home Bible Study Groups provide an opportunity for members to meet together for fellowship, to study the scriptures and for a time of prayer.

As well as our regular services during the year we acknowledged God's gift of new life at 2 Sacraments of Baptism, we conducted 1 marriage service and sought to comfort those who had been bereaved during the year.

At 31 December 2022 there were 201 communicant members and 265 families connected with the congregation.

The average weekly attendance at morning worship is 110. Services of worship were live-streamed using YouTube.

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Pastoral care

Members of the congregation who are unable to attend church due to sickness or age are visited on a regular basis by the Minister, elders or by one of the congregation's pastoral visitors.

Mission and outreach

At a local level the congregation works in its parish area to spread the good news of the gospel and provide pastoral support where needed.

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 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.

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 congregations and the wider structures of the church.

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.

Property

The Congregational Committee continue to oversee the upkeep of the property.

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Organisations

Sunday School met during the morning service. Children attend the first part of the service before moving to the halls for age appropriate teaching from the Bible.

Sunday Club offered a Sunday School for children with a learning disability on the first Sunday of the month from 3.00 – 4.00 pm.

Presbyterian Women met on the third Monday of the month (September to May). The programme aims to encourage women whose lives centre on the Lord Jesus.

Parents, Toddlers & Friends met on a Tuesday morning from 10.30 am to 12.30 pm. This is open to the community and is aimed to provide friendship and fellowship for parents, carers, friends and pre-school children within a Christian environment.

Indoor Bowling Club usually meets on Tuesday evenings. Whilst being involved in League and Cup matches the fun and fellowship in playing is the most important part.

Friends Together met on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 2.00 pm to provide fellowship for many of the elderly and shut in members who are collected by car and brought to the church hall.

Home Groups met in 4 homes on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday once a fortnight from September to Easter. Those attending come along to enjoy friendship and fellowship as well as the study of Bible passages and prayer. Two of the groups met in the church halls.

Men's Fellowship met on a Thursday morning from 10.30 am – 12.30 pm for fellowship, friendship through bowls, pool, or just a chat over a cup of tea/coffee.

Busy Hands Crafting Group met on the first and third Thursday of the month from 10.30 am – 12.30 pm. Various crafts involved e.g. knitting, crochet, card making, flower arranging, etc.

Girls Brigade met in the halls on Thursday evenings in three sections to follow a varied programme of games, craft, scripture, etc. The motto of the GB is "Seek. Serve and Follow Christ".

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Women's Breakfast - met in a home on one Saturday morning each month for fellowship and Bible study. Approx 20 members in regular attendance.

Youth Club usually met on Friday evenings from 7 – 9 pm. The programme includes many games and activities. A Centre Spot (epilogue) each week explores a range of topics.

Gardenmore Hill Walkers continued to explore Ulster on their monthly rambles. (Not meeting at present)

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.

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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. Central resources in almost all cases facilitate local delivery. 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.

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FINANCIAL REVIEW

The congregation's main source of income is members' contributions through the Weekly Freewill Offering. There were 220 contributors during the year 244 in previous year, 2022 donating a total of £105,286. (£ 111,402 in previous year, 2022)

Total Income of the congregation during the year was £ 219,095 compared to £343,341 in the previous year.

Total expenditure decreased from £170,286 (2022) to £157,982

RESPONSIBILITIES IN RESPECT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

The Trustees are required to prepare financial statements for each financial year that give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the congregations and the financial activities for that year. In preparing the financial statements the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Funds will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the funds transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the congregations and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Statement of Recommended Practice "Accounting and Reporting by Charities (1 January 2015)". 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.

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GOING CONCERN

The activities of the congregation are dependent on ongoing contributions from its members. The Trustees are of the opinion that the congregation has sufficient resources at the date of approval of these financial statements to meet commitments which will arise in the year from the date of signing this report and subject to the continuing support from members to fund on an ongoing basis the congregation's current activities and other financial commitments.

RESERVES POLICY

The Trustees have considered the level of unrestricted reserves that it is appropriate to hold taking account of current and ongoing commitments. It is the policy of the Trustees to hold at least 6 month's normal expenditure. At the year-end unrestricted reserves were £ 241,967 which represents a higher level of reserves. The Trustees however, consider it prudent to hold reserves at this level, as the funding of its present activities is dependent of the ongoing financial support of members.

RISK REVIEW

A review of major risks has been undertaken by the Trustees and systems and procedures implemented to manage identified risks. The principal risks are in relation to the likelihood of reputational damage and financial risks associated with the expectation of ongoing financial support from members.

The Trustees, and the Congregational Committee, regularly monitoring the various activities of the congregation at stated meetings and by encouraging members in their regular giving, mitigate these risks.

Approved by the Kirk Session at a meeting on 21st February 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

Signed: 

Date: 15.4.24.

Signed: 

Date: 15.4.2024

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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.

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