



ANNUAL REPORT
1ST JANUARY 2023 - 31ST DECEMBER 2023

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1.0 ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023

The trustees of Strean Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland are pleased to submit their report for the period 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023.

1.1 Mission Statement

“To know Jesus Christ and to let His Light shine.”

By:

- a) Sharing a living faith in Him and growing in that faith through discipleship, spiritual growth, Bible teaching and prayer.
- b) Lovingly caring for each other and reaching out with the good news of the Gospel.

That our Father in heaven might be glorified (Matt. 5:16)

Our Values

We believe:

- That we exist as a congregation to serve and worship God, to glorify Him and bear witness in the world to His son, Jesus.
- In the power of the Gospel to transform lives and communities.
- In the power and necessity of prayer.
- That sound teaching of God’s Word is central to worship and all of church life.
- That we should be involved in sharing the Gospel in both local and global outreach.
- That as a church family we should show God’s love to each other.
- That children and young people are an integral part of the Church. Our desire is that as they grow up in our fellowship they will come to respond to the love of Christ.
- In being open, welcoming and outward looking.

Mission Plan

Over the five years from 2019 to 2024 we propose to:

- Help every member of the congregation grow spiritually.
- Encourage involvement in church life for every member of the congregation.
- Encourage participation in regular teaching and Bible Study.
- Encourage corporate and individual prayer.
- Develop pastoral work and pastoral team ministry.
- Provide assistance to and opportunities for the many young families in our congregation to become involved in service and, where appropriate, leadership.
- Provide support and encouragement to our youth and children’s leaders.
- Investigate and foster ways to ensure continued involvement of young people through teens and twenties.
- Build on existing relationships with other churches and the local community.
- Extend our existing involvement with "overseas" mission.
- Encourage growth of small group ministry.
- Increase the focus on social witness and outreach within our local community.

In order to put this plan into action we will:

- Ensure that we have in place the appropriate personnel, resources, facilities and finance to facilitate our mission plan.
- Monitor, evaluate and review each of the listed objectives annually, so that they continue to be relevant and effective in helping us to live out our mission statement.

The strapline to incorporate all aspects of our mission statement is, “Let His Light Shine”.

1.2 Church Organisations and Events

We have various and complementary groups and organisations catering for the varied and complete range of our congregation and needs.

Our activities and organisations continued to be well attended, with the exception of the Thursday drop-in. Session reviewed the purpose and benefit of continuing a community drop-in and agreed to hold a Tuesday afternoon drop-in for a trial period to target older members of the congregation. Attendance was very poor, and it was agreed that the needs of older members of the congregation are met with the monthly men's breakfasts and ladies' coffee mornings.

Average numbers attending each organisation is in parenthesis:

- Discovery Sunday School (15)
- Discovery Tots crèche (2)
- Youth Fellowship (15)
- Craft Class (30)
- Girls' Brigade (60)
- Tots and Toddlers (35)
- Boys' Brigade (50)
- Small Bible study groups (25)
- Football & Fellowship (10)
- Badminton (15)
- Indoor Bowls (15)
- Presbyterian Women (30) and monthly coffee morning (12)
- Men's Fellowship (15) and a monthly breakfast (20)
- Youth Club (100)
- Holiday Bible Club (70)
- Summer Blitz 3-day activity programme for teenagers (40)

1.3 Challenges and Future Vision

The Trustees have worked hard to provide a Church and an organisation which is working as it should in an efficient and effective manner. Session approved the 2022 Accounts on 23rd April 2023, and they were adopted at the A.G.M. on 30th November 2023. Our main desire is for the Church to grow and for our Bible knowledge, discipling and mentoring of the congregation, particularly with new converts, to be the main thrust of the way ahead.

Our weekly activities continued to grow in numbers. We held our Antiques & Collectables Fairs in May and October, and our Christmas Sale in December, all of which were well attended. A Coronation "Sausage Sizzle" was held in May, which provided an opportunity for friendship and fellowship.

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1.4 Target Areas

The following are some “Target Areas” for our immediate focus of both the challenges and opportunities that lie before us. These were developed and agreed by our governing body, the Kirk Session, in the first year of Rev. Jeff McWatters’ tenure with the congregation in 2017. These areas were reviewed on an ongoing basis by Session: -

Prayer

- Through the Holy Spirit to encourage prayer within the congregation and organisations so that members see the value of prayer in its different styles and formats

Preaching

- To preach the Gospel faithfully ensuring adherence to God’s Word and ordinances. Our vision is that this will be in a relevant and contemporary fashion to engage all who worship in Strean.

Pastoral

- To ensure Strean has an effective, compassionate and loving Pastoral Care ministry. This would be working with and utilising our existing team, adding new members, and encompassing gifts within our fellowship.

Mission Outreach

- In conjunction with Session and the Mission sub-committee, to create an effective strategy for both local, community-based outreach and a sustainable programme for evangelism and mission activities. This would include steps to provide engagement within those families and individuals who connect with the social events in the Church.

Youth

- To encourage young people who associate with Strean to grow spiritually and encourage them to actively participate in the life of the congregation.

1.5 Minister’s Report – Rev. Jeff McWatters

2023 was really our first complete year of activities and church life post-covid. It continued to be challenging for a number of people but also greatly encouraging as we saw more people re-engage. The year progressed well with increased attendance at Sunday services and at our mid-week Bible studies. Pastoral care continued to be central to all that we did as people still struggled with what has happened over the last 2 years.

We were greatly encouraged by the number of volunteers without whom we would not have been able to function effectively. Our focus, as always, was on seeking God’s will and direction and the discipling of His people.

1.6 Church Committee Report – Mr Brian Nixon

2023 was another busy year for our church committee as each subcommittee continued to fulfil their roles throughout the year, and effectively ensured the continued running of church services and activities. In September, three of our committee members were ordained and installed as elders, and an election for new committee members is planned for the autumn of 2024.

There were two major property projects in 2023. Firstly, the Adgey Hall roof had to be replaced, after almost 50 years. The second was the installation and commissioning of 35 solar panels and 4 large storage batteries. The capital outlay for both these projects came from the Property Fund and it is anticipated that we will recoup the cost of the solar panels and batteries through energy savings in approximately 6 years. In addition to the benefit from significant energy cost savings in the future, we are able to visibly demonstrating to the local community our commitment to conservation and sustainability. The Property subcommittee will continue to manage and monitor the performance of this sustainable energy project.

The other significant investment in 2023 was by the AV-IT Subcommittee, both of their time and financially. A new computer, screen and radio microphones were purchased for the church, to improve the audio and visual provision for those attending church in person, and to improve the quality of our Sunday morning live-stream.

1.7 Serious Incident Reporting

During the year to December 2023, no serious Child Protection incidents were reported to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's Social Witness Department, which is responsible for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults.

No reports were made to the Information Commissioner's Office.

1.8 Public Benefit Statement

The trustees of Strean Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland confirm that they have complied with their duty under section 17 (5) of the Charities Act 2011 to have regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and that the public benefit requirement has informed the activities of the Society in the year to 31st December 2023. In evaluating public benefit, the trustees note that communicant membership of Strean Presbyterian Church is open to all who have a personal faith in God as Creator and Saviour. Whilst we would encourage those with personal faith to join our congregation, we also serve God within our community and offer a warm welcome to everyone who comes in to attend services or other activities, irrespective of their personal faith.

2.0 Finance Report

2.1 Financial Review

General Account (No. 1 Account)

This is our housekeeping account, out of which all expenses relating to the everyday running of the church e.g. salaries, heat, light, insurance, offices costs and all payments to Church House, PCI are made. Income during the year from Free Will Offering amounted to £81,397 (an increase of 5.6% on the previous year), and Gift Aid claimed from HMRC for 2022/23 tax year generated £15,714.

Property funds

The Property account is used to upkeep our church, Halls and the manse. Income of £12,137 was received into this account from congregational giving (monthly envelopes and online giving), which is an increase of 6.7%, compared to 2022. Other income was received from gift aid, and 50% of the income from the Harvest Gift Day, split with the Mission Fund. In terms of both the Missions and Property accounts, we were delighted to be able to hold two Antique Fairs and the Christmas Sale in 2023. The Fundraising Committee was able to transfer the sum of £3,750 to the Property account.

As mentioned in section 1.6, we have invested in the installation and commissioning of 35 solar panels and 4 large storage batteries. The capital outlay came from the Property Fund, and it is anticipated that we will recoup this cost through energy savings in approximately 6 years. In the following years, we will benefit from significant energy cost savings.

Missions

Mission outreach from Strean congregation is funded from this account. Income is obtained from a number of sources i.e. United Appeal, monthly mission and specific appeal envelopes, online donations, gift aid, a small bequest and 50% of the Harvest Gift Day collection and Fundraising events. In 2023, giving through envelopes and online donations for general mission was £10,746, an increase of 12.9% compared to the previous year. An additional £7,138 was donated for specific appeals and charities and £4,096 was received through Gift Aid. A total of £27,471 was allocated to cover the wide range of mission and charitable causes supported by Strean, including our requirement for the PCI United Appeal of £8,882. The Fundraising Committee was able to transfer the sum of £1,640 to the Missions account.

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2.2 Accounts for the Year ended 31st December 2023

Receipts & Payments Account

RECEIPTS	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	TOTAL 2023
Freewill/ Envelopes & Gift Aid	95,235	33,058		<u>128,293</u>
Bequests/ Investment Income		3,502	30,841	<u>34,343</u>
Special Collections		7,453		<u>7,453</u>
Loose collections	2,059	574		<u>2,633</u>
Fundraising	618	5,390		<u>6,008</u>
Organisation Income	1,200	360		<u>1,560</u>
Income from external users	2,956			<u>2,956</u>
Grants	600			<u>600</u>
Other income	524	43		<u>567</u>
TOTAL RECEIPTS	103,192	50,380	30,841	184,413
PAYMENTS	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	TOTAL 2023
Staff Costs	75,422			<u>75,422</u>
General Assembly & Presbytery Costs	11,903			<u>11,903</u>
Church, Halls & Grounds		70,757		<u>70,757</u>
Manse		284		<u>284</u>
United Appeal		8,882		<u>8,882</u>
Donations to Missions/ Projects		18,589		<u>18,589</u>
Other expenses	38,074	279		<u>38,353</u>
TOTAL PAYMENTS	£125,399	98,791	0	£224,190

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2.3 Statement of Assets and Liabilities

Assets

Investments £1,172,837

Current Assets

Bank and Cash Balances £ 85,629

Total Current Assets £1,258,466

Liabilities

Bank Overdrafts £ 0

Non-bank Loans £ 0

Total Current Liabilities £ 0

Net Assets £1,258,466

Fund Balances

Unrestricted Funds £ 50,500

Restricted Funds £ 35,129

Endowment Funds £1,172,837

Total Fund Balances £1,258,466

Name of Bank Account

Danske Bank No 1 A/C (General Account) £ 50,500

Danske Bank No 3 A/C (Property) £ 29,488

Danske Bank No 4 A/C (Mission) £ 5,461

Balances from Organisations £ 13,198

Total £ 98,647

2.4 Notes to the Accounts

Trustees' Expenses

No expenses were paid to any of the Trustees during the year except to reimburse them for purchases made on behalf of the charity.

Accounting Policies

Section 133 of the Charities Act 2011 permits a charity to prepare a receipts and payments account and a statement of assets and liabilities where gross income in the financial year does not exceed £250,000, therefore receipts and payments accounts and a statement of assets and liabilities has been prepared and presented for the year ended 31st December 2023.

All Income, including grants and investment income is recorded when received.

All Expenditure is recorded when paid.

Gift aid reclaimable on donations is included in the amounts of income once received.

Independent Scrutiny

The Accounts were audited by Stanley Woods & Co, Registered Auditors and Accountants and a copy of the "Statement of Income and Expenditure and Independent Examiners Report" is included in the accounts.

Cheques not cleared at bank at 31st December 2023

There were a small number of cheques issued by the church which had not cleared at the bank by 31st December 2023, but they were all cleared by 31st January 2024 and included in the 2023 Accounts.

3.0 Reference and Administrative Details

3.1 Charity Details

Charity Name: Strean Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Charity Number: Registered Charity in Northern Ireland, NIC 105064

Principal Address: West Street, Newtownards, Co. Down, BT23 4EN

Trustees as of December 31st 2023:

Rev. Jeff McWatters (Chairman)	Mr Wallace McKee (Clerk of Session)	
Mr Brian Nixon (Church Secretary)	Mr Stuart Faloon (Deputy Clerk)	
Mr Phil Baron*	Mrs Stephanie Baron*	Mr John Black
Mrs Rosemary Black*	Mrs Fiona Boyle	Mr Stephen Boyle
Mr Philip Causby	Dr Carl Harris	Mrs Joanne Harris*
Mrs Heather Faloon*	Mr Alan Frazer	Ms Janet Johnston
Mr Robin Kennedy*	Mr Morris McAllister*	Graham Scandrett*
Mr John Scott	Mrs Roberta Wilson	Mr Samuel Young

*From 15 September 2023

Bank: Danske Bank, High Street, Newtownards, Co. Down, BT23 7HS

Auditors & Accountants: Stanley Woods & Co., Alexander House, 49/51 Church Street, Newtownards, Co. Down, BT23 4AN

Insurance Broker: TL Dallas (NI) Ltd., 63 Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 6SA

3.2 Governance and Staffing

On 31st December 2023 the Kirk Session consisted of 22 Ruling Elders, each having been previously voted for by the eligible voting members of Strean Congregation. This includes seven elders who were ordained and installed, and one elder who was installed, on 15th September 2023. Each Ruling Elder is also a charity trustee of Strean Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

The Kirk Session is responsible for the spiritual welfare and pastoral care of members of the congregation. They hold scheduled business meetings approximately five times a year.

The Church Committee is responsible for the practical affairs of the church and works through seven subcommittees: finance, reception, property (manse and church), hospitality, audio-visual and information technology, publicity and communications and fundraising. The committee of 13 members who were elected in June 2021 continued to serve as committee members throughout 2023. However, three of the committee members became elders in September 2023 and an election for a new congregational committee is planned for 2024.

3.3 Related Organisations

Strean, a congregation in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission NI (Charity Number NIC 105064); the contact person for the charity is the Clerk of Session, Wallace McKee.

The Accounts and Annual Report for each congregation must be submitted for approval to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland by 31st May each year. The Minister and a Representative Elder from each congregation usually attend the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in June each year.