

Trustees Annual Report

First Islandmagee Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

(NIC 105075)

Lunnon Road, Islandmagee, Larne, BT40 3TH

Report for the financial year 01 January 2020 to 31 December 2020

Trustees (on date of signature below)

Jack Smith

Sherman Hawthorne

Rev Peter Bovill

Irene Crawford

Monice Crawford

John Ross

Paul Crawford

Charles Smith

Pauline Ford

What follows is the Trustees Annual Report for the year 2020.

And signed on behalf of the trustees by

Signature:



Date: 15th March 2021

Finances

The detail of the financial position can be found within the financial report.

There is no account that is in deficit.

Public Benefit

The charity trustees have complied with their duties in line with the commission's public benefit statutory guidance. More detail concerning this public benefit can be found in the body of the report below.

Some specific points found within the report below are ...

Beneficiaries – those benefitting from the activities of our church during this past year have included our church family, young children through to older members, along with our local community, both young and old.

Restrictions and Harm

The trustees sought to minimise any restrictions of access to the activities of the church. Fees (if any) were low and the local community centre was utilised where appropriate to allow minimal travel for some (especially young people).

All activities of our church that involve children and young people are guided by 'Taking Care' (the child protection policy and programme of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland).

Purposes of the charity

The trustees have continued to support and facilitate the purposes of our church as detailed on the website of The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. Services of Worship have been held weekly along with other activities for a range of people, both members of our congregation and / or our local community.

A further summary of these purposes and activities can be found in the body of the report below.

Trustees Appointment

Trustees are appointed in accordance with the process contained with 'The Code' (The constitution and government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland). Only the communicant members of the congregation can appoint new trustees.

Governing Document

'The Code' (The constitution and government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland) continues to be the governing document of our charity.

Kirk Session (Trustees) Report to the Congregation for the Year 2020

In the first two months of 2020 we began what promised to be another busy year of life within our congregations. The youth organisations got underway again after the break over Christmas and the New Year, Kingdom Kids met every Sunday, seven Bible Study groups gathered regularly to read and discuss God's word, PW had three worthwhile meetings including our "night out" at the Bentra, the Kirk Sessions met jointly to pray and to seek to develop the spiritual life of the congregations, Congregational Committees met to discuss the upkeep of the buildings and to consider ways in which they could be better used; in short the business of being church as we have known it was continuing as usual.

Early in January we had two Communion Services, one in the Community Hall and the other at the morning service in First. Both were well attended. As part of his visit to the Carrickfergus Presbytery we were pleased to welcome the Moderator of the General Assembly, The Right Rev W J Henry, to our morning worship on 2nd February and to a "Bring Your Own" lunch (with desserts supplied) afterwards in 2nd Church Hall. Session was represented at a meeting of the Disciple Makers Network and at an evening conference "Going Deeper, Going Wider", both in Assembly Buildings. During the first week in March we had a Prayer Week with a Prayer Room being set up in the Long Room. This was well used by groups and individuals. Our congregations were represented at The World Day of Prayer service in Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Whitehead which came at the end of that week. With Easter approaching in early April we had plans for communion on Palm Sunday, followed by a "Together" Service in the afternoon and for a special service on Easter Sunday with a fun event also that weekend. We had also planned our usual Day of Prayer for Good Friday and the joint churches service that evening.

However, by early March unease was apparent as the coronavirus known as covid-19 began to spread and we heard of people becoming seriously ill and of related deaths. The recognition that we were in the midst of a pandemic and the decision of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive that the country would go into "lockdown" brought a sudden halt to all of our activities from 22nd March. Little did we imagine that this would last in some shape or form for the rest of the year and beyond.

“Keeping in touch” became the watchword for the next weeks and months. Members were encouraged to make contact with others and information and encouragements were posted on our Facebook page at regular intervals. The monthly magazines contributed to by many different people and edited by Peter and Jacqui were particularly appreciated. Hard copies were supplied, with due regard for the prevailing restrictions, to those who couldn’t get access online. On two occasions all members of the congregations were contacted by post when we needed to ensure that information got to everybody. One group which quickly reorganised and began “working from home” was UCB’s Prayer Line in which a number of our members are involved. This arrangement is likely to continue beyond the present crisis. A “casualty” of the lockdown was our plan to appoint a new Youth Worker. The sessions decided to postpone any decision on this until 2021.

The Kirk Sessions were able to meet, suitably socially distanced, in early July when it was agreed to establish a small working group “Project Restart” to prepare for the opening up of our church buildings, initially for funerals and later for public worship. Meeting online via “Zoom” the practical arrangements were made and a further session meeting agreed to provide two rooms, one at Second and one at First for smaller group meetings. No other areas of church property were opened in 2020, except that Islandmagee Primary School was given permission to use the hall at First. Having established by way of a survey in the congregations that sufficient people were happy to return to Sunday worship in person, a system for booking a seat was put in place and, as the numbers booking exceeded the capacity of Second under covid restrictions, most services have been held in First. These services were posted online and, at a later date, live streamed for those who couldn’t attend. After 24 weeks without live services we were able to have 17 services before we went into “lockdown” again just before Christmas. At one of these services we celebrated the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, albeit with all-in-one symbols collected on the way in.

There had been plans for PW to meet in one or other of the churches, but the women of the congregations have enjoyed the online meetings which happened instead. All that was missing was the chat and the cuppa! As it was not possible for other organisations to meet the leaders did what they could to keep in touch with children and young people. At Christmas small gifts

were distributed to those families with children of primary school age associated with our congregations. During the advent season we had a daily “Countdown to Christmas” with readings, prayers and suggestions of things to “do” to focus our minds on God and his coming gift to us. The highlights of this season were the online candlelit Carol Service from Second led by a suitably distanced Church Choir, and two “Christmas” Services on 20th December, one in First and the other in Second when both churches were almost full to what we now know as “capacity”.

It goes without saying that all of the above required a great deal of planning and, while many were involved in one or more areas and deserve our thanks for giving their time and expertise, the burden of coordinating and providing technical know-how fell heavily on Peter, our minister. This was all on top of his “duties” in pastoring the congregations, not least in times of sickness, bereavement or other difficulty. These were hard times in the midst of the pandemic and we sorrow that we could not show our love and concern in the usual tangible ways, but to each and every one affected we assure you of our continued prayers. Many have struggled with the consequences of the virus and of “lockdown” from loneliness or mental fatigue to family responsibilities or economic hardship. All of us can pray for our minister, others in leadership roles and those in particular need, and all of us can look out for each other and those in our community. It is worth remembering that, even when the “bottom falls out” God knows it all, and that his love for each of us is as great as for the Psalmist who wrote, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life”. (Ps 23 v 6) In that knowledge we can look forward with hope and expectation.

Jack Smith (Clerk of Session)