

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEWTOWNARDS
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 NIC105087

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

First Newtownards Congregation of The Presbyterian Church In Ireland
Registered Charity in Northern Ireland – NIC105087

CHARITY TRUSTEES

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

Rev. Craig Lynn
Mr. Russell Armour
Mr. James Bole
Mr. David Cargo
Mr. Stephen Clarke
Mr. Paul Craig
Mr. William Davidson
Mr. Charles Graham
Mr. Thomas Haylett
Mr. David Logan
Mr. William Meredith
Mrs. Hilary Patton
Mrs. Audrey Reid
Mr. Ian Ritchie
Mr. Michael Tweedie
Mr. Wilfred Weatherup
Dr. Raymond Whiteford

PRINCIPAL OFFICE BEARERS

Minister	Rev Craig Lynn
Clerk of Session	Mr. David Cargo
Treasurer	Mr. Russell Armour

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Mr. S. N. S. McCurdy, 27 Orange Lane, Magheralin, Co. Armagh, BT67 0RG

BANKERS

Ulster Bank, 22 Frances Street, Newtownards, BT23 7DP

SOLICITORS

Russell Solicitors Newtownards, 11 Lower Mary Street, BT23 4JJ

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 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 on about 6 or 7 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. First Presbyterian Church, Newtownards congregation of the Presbyterian Church has been assigned to the Ards 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.

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

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

First Presbyterian Church, Newtownards 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 congregation's mission statement is: -

First Presbyterian Church exists to worship and glorify God and to be used by God to introduce people to Jesus Christ and the joy to be found in knowing Him as Saviour and walking daily with Him.

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.

ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

The congregation meets for worship every Sunday and visitors are welcome to join. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is observed on 4 occasions during the year. The congregation has a number of bible study groups that meet regularly throughout the year. The Sacrament of Baptism is administered throughout the year and Services of Thanksgiving (i.e. Funeral Services) are held as requested.

The congregation has the following organisations: -

Bible Class
Boys' Brigade
Girls' Brigade
Junior CE
Presbyterian Women
Sunday School (known as Lighthouse)

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Worship and prayer

The congregation meets for worship each Sunday at 11:30am (11:00am in July and August).

At 31st December 2023 there were 186 communicant members and 200 families connected with the congregation. The average weekly attendance at morning worship is 150 and evening worship 40.

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 supports one of our members, who is working in the mission field in Cambodia through the organisation Care for Cambodia. Part of this project involves the support of a number of schools in Cambodia.

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 congregations in the areas of worship, discipleship, global mission, outreach, leadership and pastoral care. We also supported the work of a debt manager within the link for Christians Against Poverty.

The congregation also contributes to the denomination's annual World Development Appeal and other special appeals.

Presbytery

The congregation was represented at the regular meetings of Presbytery by our minister and a representative elder. 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 congregation has the main Church along with Minor and Guild Hall complexes. In addition the congregation has a manse at Tullynagardy, Newtownards.

Organisations

We have many organisations who meet weekly and cater for all ages within the congregation.

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 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

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEWTOWNARDS, CONGREGATION OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

The congregation's main source of income is members' contributions through the Weekly Freewill Offering. There were 161 contributors during the year compared to 156 in 2022, donating a total of £79,500 compared to £85,727 in 2022.

Total Income of the congregation during the year was £148,552 compared to £568,154 in the previous year.

Total Expenditure was £151,217 compared to £517,027 the previous year.

This is due to the sale and purchase of a manse in 2022.

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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Approved by the Kirk Session at a meeting on 01/10/2024 and signed on its behalf by: -

Signed



Name

Paul Craig

Russell Armour

(Trustee)

(Trustee)

