

**Scrabo Presbyterian Church
Trustees' Annual Report
Year ended 31 December 2023**

The Trustees present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Reference and administrative details

Registered charity name Scrabo Presbyterian Church

Charity registration number NIC105122

Principal office 77 Blenheim Drive Newtownards Co Down BT23 4QY

The Trustees

Mr R Baxter
Mr D Bickerstaff (until 9 July)
Mrs M Cameron
Reverend A Ditty (until 12 August)
Mr J Doherty
Mrs C Donnelly
Mr A Duncan
Mr R Jackson
Mr D McCracken

Accountant Graeme Allen Chartered Accountant (FCA)

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STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT

THE KIRK SESSION

The charity Trustees of the Congregation are the members of its Kirk Session. 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 ministers in active duty in the congregation, has no deliberative but only a casting 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. Scrabo congregation of the Presbyterian Church has been assigned to the Ards Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

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.

SCRABO GOVERNANCE

The Kirk Session met twelve times during the year, a more frequent basis than usual, due to the ministerial Vacancy.

The congregation actively participated in all of the business of the Ards Presbytery through our Assistant Minister and Representative Elders.

The Congregational Committee met on five occasions, with a considerable amount of time spent on discussions regarding the possible upgrading of the church premises, as well as other routine and necessary business.

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

The charitable purpose of the congregation is the advancement of religion. Scrabo 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, 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 is summarised in the phrase '*Serving Christ in the Heart of the Community*'. The church's mission is not purely for the minister, the Kirk Session, or Organisation leaders to carry out, but it is the mission of all God's servants within the congregation.

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By the grace of God, we aim to be a welcoming, inclusive, caring community of Christ's people of all ages, which:

- is increasingly characterised by love for God, and love and concern for others;
- is committed to the historic Christian gospel as revealed in the Bible;
- is relevant to people of this time and place.

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 public worship each Sunday morning at 10.30am. The average attendance at Morning Worship throughout the year was 66.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was observed as determined by the Kirk Session.

A Sunday evening Bible Study group met each week alongside the continuing wide range of organisations and activities, catering for all ages and interests.

Our Minister stood down from his position in August owing to ill health and a process was then commenced to seek approval to call a new Minister. Reverend Alvin Little was appointed by the Ards Presbytery as Vacancy Convener to provide oversight of the congregation for the interim period.

The congregation provided pastoral care and support to six families who experienced bereavement during the year, including the family of one of our Ruling Elders, Mr Desie Bickerstaff.

At 31 December there were 123 families connected with the congregation. The number of individuals in communicant (full) membership also reduced – in both cases this was due to reviews by the Kirk Session of families who were no longer attached to the church.

Pastoral Care

Families in the congregation were regularly kept in contact with the Fellowship by:

- The visits of the Minister and Elders, although there is also a healthy informal communications network through which members keep in contact and provide support to each other.
- The Streaming of Worship Services using various internet platforms continued during the year for families who are unable to attend; a number of families also received a DVD or Audio disc recording of each Service.

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Mission and Outreach

The congregation supports a number of initiatives at local, national and international level:

- A distribution of groceries collected at our Harvest Service was arranged in partnership with the Warehouse charity in Glenford Way Newtownards.
Scrabo continued to provide financial support to the Debt Counselling service provided by *Christians Against Poverty* which benefits families within the parish.
- As in previous years, Scrabo supported a number of national and international initiatives through the various agencies of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and leading Christian Mission organisations. Substantial support was given to the Church's *United Appeal for Missions* within Ireland and abroad and to an Emergency Relief project in Syria/Turkey and to ongoing work in Malawi.
- At Christmas, gifts were made to the Presbyterian Church-wide World Development Appeal and the local Newtownards Salvation Army Christmas toy appeal.
Scrabo also provided gifts to Bible Society NI, Christian Aid (Ireland), Friends International, an appeal to repair the roof of an Argentinian church, and The Link (Newtownards).

While this support from Scrabo took the form of financial gifts or gifts in kind, there was also much prayer support, for both local family situations and international crises during the regular in-person Prayer sessions.

ORGANISATION ACTIVITIES

Presbyterian Women and the **Women's Fellowship** had their usual programme of meetings with guest speakers and social activities. Following the retirement of two long-term Leaders, a new Leader came forward for the Women's Fellowship with the support of other women.

The **Boys Brigade** continued to attract a large number of boys to their weekly activities while the

Girls Brigade experienced some difficulty due to a reduction in the number of Officers and Associates, but members of the congregation stepped in to fill the gaps.

The work of both Uniformed Organisations was formally recognised at their respective Enrolment Services.

The **Parent & Toddlers Group** met on Wednesday mornings, and the Friday Drop-in **Oasis coffee morning** remained popular as an opportunity for many in the local area to maintain social contacts.

The **Craft 'n Yarn Group** has not met due to the withdrawal of the Leader to undertake study.

A major effort was mounted to create a Holiday Bible Club programme for the first week of August. This was widely publicised and an encouraging number of local families became involved – many with little or no connection with Scrabo church. A large number of Volunteers from the church was assembled to run the successful programme, which concluded on the Friday evening with a barbecue attended by some 200 people of all ages from the local community.

Scrabo congregation continued to work alongside the nearby West Winds Community Church with both Ministers leading an Open-air Carol Service at the local shops.

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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, which supports general overheads, property and missions. There were 85 contributing families during the year donating a total of £81,985 (99 families donating £77,931 in 2022).

Total Income of the congregation during 2023 was £137,067 compared to £126,257 in 2022.
Total expenditure in 2023 was £119,480 compared to £122,755 in 2022.

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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) 208 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.

GOING CONCERN

The activities of the congregation are dependent on the continuing contributions from its members. The Trustees are of the opinion that the congregation has sufficient reserves at the date of the approval of the financial statements to meet commitments which will arise in the year ahead, and to fund the ongoing activities and other financial commitments. A Building Fund is being maintained with a view to undertaking a major scheme of refurbishment to continue to meet current building standards and provide an enhanced quality of meeting spaces within the property. Discussions with the Presbytery architects remain ongoing with estimated costs of a substantial refurbishment having been provided.

RISK REVIEW

The Trustees regularly review a range of major risks. Systems and procedures have been put in place to identify and manage these. The principal risks are in relation to reputational damage, and also financial risks associated with the expectation of continuing financial support from members. These risks are mitigated by the Trustees and the Congregational Committee who regularly review the activities of the congregation and the associated costs, and approve of specific expenditure while encouraging generous giving by the Church members. Both the Trustees and the Congregational Committee have been aware of a decline in church membership and a consequent reduction in donations, but both are confident that a generous response from members in the final months of the year will sustain the congregation until a new ministry is established in 2024.

RESERVES POLICY

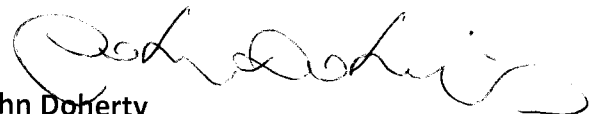
The Trustees monitor the level of unrestricted reserves, taking account of current and ongoing commitments. Funding of the current range of activities is dependent on the continued financial support of the Church members.

Approved by the Kirk Session at a meeting held on 26 February 2024 and signed on its behalf by



**Reverend Alvin Little
(Vacancy Convener)**

Date 26.2.2024



**John Doherty
(Clerk of Session)**

Date 26.2.2024