

BALLYHOLME PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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 (NIC105128)

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The Trustees present their Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 including a Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at that date.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Ballyholme Presbyterian Church congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland
46, Ashley Drive
Bangor
BT20 5RD
Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC105128)

CHARITY TRUSTEES

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

Peter Lyle	Joan Hunter
David Adgey Resigned 17 October 2023	Susan Adgey Resigned 17 October 2023
Simon Liggett	Steven Hamilton Resigned 17 October 2023
Hazel Larmour	John Luke
Tom McAvoy	William McCoubrey
Mervyn Menown	Ronald Patton
Francis Russell	Lesley Reid
Muriel Smyth	Rosemary Rutledge
Audrey Titterington	Stuart Stevenson
Michael White	

PRINCIPAL OFFICE BEARERS

Minister	Rev. P.C. Lyle
Clerk of Session	Mrs. Joan Hunter
Treasurer	Mr. A. R. S. Stevenson

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Stanley Woods & Co, Alexander House, 49/51 Church Street, Newtownards, BT23 4AN

BANKERS

Danske Bank, Bloomfield Shopping Centre, Bangor
Ulster Bank, Springhill Shopping Centre, Bangor

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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 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.

Stated meetings of the Kirk session are held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month excepting July and August.

To be chosen for the office of the eldership in the congregation a person must be a voting member, a contributor to the Free Will Offering and a regular attendant at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The selection of those proposed to be called to the office can be either by the congregation or by the Kirk Session. Nominated members are elected if they obtain two-thirds of those who vote at a special congregational meeting.

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. Ballyholme Presbyterian Church 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 from congregations within the Presbytery, an elder appointed by the Kirk Session of the congregation and other invited representatives.

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

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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, a representative elder appointed by the Kirk Session of each congregation and other invited representatives from various areas of church life.

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

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

Ballyholme Presbyterian Church 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 purposes are by the grace of God, to help people of all ages become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. Our vision is, by the grace of God, to be an inclusive, welcoming 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.

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ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

The congregation meets for worship every Sunday and visitors are welcome to join. The Sacrament of the Lords Supper is observed on several 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 and activities including: -

- Sunday School
- Parent and Toddlers
- New Horizons
- Ladies Group
- Youth Council
- My Church
- Men's Group
- Badminton
- Sunday Crèche
- Youth Fellowship
- Praise Band
- Bowling Club
- Pre-School Group
- After Service Tea/Coffee
- Flower Guild
- Prayer Ministry
- Making Mornings
- Ramblers
-

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Worship and prayer

Throughout 2023 we continued to adapt to a post Covid environment. Service attendances settled to a level not far below pre Covid levels. Particular encouragement was the number of children in attendance and participating in the children's section of the service. The music praise has been led by a Praise Group, and Organist and a pianist who work on a rota system. We have continued to meet monthly with the other churches in Ballyholme being a monthly United Service which rotates around the churches involved, weekly evening epilogue services through July and August, and Holy Week services from Palm Sunday to Good Friday followed by an Easter Dawn Service which has seen other churches from the area starting to join with us. In 2023 Ballyholme Parish Church hosted the Holy Week services. It was a deep regret that Ballyholme Methodist church closed in May 2023. We will carry very special memories of our times working alongside them in the community.

Our services continue to be streamed live via YouTube each week and are available for viewing from then on and the evening prayer posts for members of the congregation and anyone else who joins us on social media are posted every day. We continue to host Wedding and funeral services although 2023 saw a marked shift in Weddings being held in 'venues' where the whole day's events are in the one location.

Our post service refreshments continue to be one of the highlights of the week with the majority of attenders choosing to remain afterwards for social engagement. This develops relationships among the congregation and is a much appreciated service particularly by our elderly members who enjoy the company.

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The year also sees the Church Calendar marked with Easter, Harvest and Christmas Services and we also have the sacramental celebrations of communion and baptisms.

The second half of 2023 saw our minister off for an extended period due to ill health. Worship services were covered each week by a variety of retired ministers who live in the local area and one dealt with pastoral emergencies and funerals.

We have two prayer groups who meet each week - one in person group on a Tuesday morning and another Zoom meeting on a Thursday evening. These are supported by a committed group of church members.

Pastoral care

Pastoral care is primarily delivered by the Minister who visits families who request such support, as well as those who are ill, in hospital or bereaved. These often require several follow up visits as well. He also visits around the elderly. A major challenge that has developed in recent years is the lack of notifications from hospitals with many members saying they are never asked about church affiliation on admission to hospital. We have been encouraging families to take on the responsibility to notify us. We have also been trialing a mentorship scheme for our young people.

Mission and outreach

The start of 2023 saw the congregation appointing a Youth Worker to oversee and deliver Youth ministry within the congregation and as he does so develop connections with families of young people who come along to our activities. Out of this we have commenced a number of new ventures. An after school drop in for secondary level pupils takes place on a Thursday afternoon and on Wednesdays we have opened our hall for parents, grandparents and carers who have picked up children from Ballyholme Primary School at 2pm and have to wait until 3pm to pick up older siblings. We provide refreshments, conversation and activities for the younger children. Many of those who come along do not attend our congregation so it is a real, and much appreciated, service to the community. The work with young people continues with trips to events such as Summer Madness and Ice Hockey matches. We also host Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers as well as Active Sport NI who work with pre-school and primary age children and a children's drama group.

The church also runs a very successful and busy Parent & Toddlers Group, a crafting group and a badminton group. All these involve church members and members of the community.

We have also become involved in the establishment of a community group called Love Ballyholme. Our Youth Worker represents us on the Committee and we are involved in running community family events.

We continue to support our appeals through the Presbyterian Church, Christian Aid, Samaritan Purse's Operation Christmas Child, Salvation Army Christmas Appeal, The Earl Haig Fund and Storehouse North Down as well as a family working in Senegal with Wycliffe Bible Translators.

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We are involved in work in the local schools namely, Ballyholme and Towerview Primary Schools. Our minister is Chair of the Board of Governors in both schools and along with our Youth Worker conducts school assembly and participates in delivering some RE classes in partnership with Scripture Union.

We are looking at more ways in which we can reach into the community.

We continue to participate in the life of the local Presbytery through our minister and a representative elder. They attend the monthly meetings and serve on various committees and commissions of the Presbytery.

Ballyholme Presbyterian Church visits Senegal

In April 2023, 8 members of the congregation took the opportunity to visit our Wycliffe missionaries the Lowrys, in Senegal. The Lyle, Woodgates and Hamilton families set off for just over a week to Thèis. For five days we worked with the children of four families, including Emily and Aoife Lowry, providing childcare and a holiday bible club experience of songs, games, crafts and teaching. This enabled the mums and dads who are all involved in bible translation projects around the vast country, to spend time together in conference, giving and receiving reports of the progress of their projects and spending time in retreat and worship.

Our team bonded so well together and loved working with these precious children. In addition, we all felt we left with a much deeper understanding of the work that the Lowry's are involved in and the very different lifestyle challenges that they face. This has impacted our ability to pray for them in more specific and practical ways.

At the end of the trip, the team had one day off and spent it visiting a local game drive, relaxing, and marvelling at the wonderful birds and animals who roamed there, as well as the spectacular scenery. It was a wonderful experience for everyone, not least the three girls of the party, who came home with new tailor-made African dresses and memories to last a lifetime!

General Assembly

We were represented at the General Assembly in June 2023 by your Minister and representative elder.

Property

None

ORGANISATIONS

Music Ministry

The Music Ministry has had another very positive year with all our singers and musicians both in the Praise Band and June on organ and Cherry on piano continuing to generously give their time to lead us, as a congregation, to God's throne in praise and worship.

We are hugely blessed that our young people are willing to be increasingly involved in this ministry with Christopher regularly contributing to our services on the organ and the new Youth Band, formed

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though Youth Fellowship by the young people themselves and ably led by Ellie now having led both a pre-Christmas Youth Service and a fantastic Worship & Prayer service in February.

God has blessed our congregation with musically gifted people and we are always on the lookout for others to join the Music Ministry so if you feel that God is leading you to make use of your talents to play and/or sing in church, come and have a chat with any of us.

Prayer Ministry

Prayer Ministry meet on Tuesday morning at 11.00am in the Primary Room. All prayer requests are confidential and we pray one month for each one. There are two prayer request boxes and cards, one in the church reception area and one in the halls reception area.

A warm welcome is extended to all to join us in prayer (the spoken and the unspoken) friendship and fellowship together. We feel it is a great privilege to pray for the needs of our own church family, our missionaries and the wider world.

We have much to thank God for and much to seek His guidance for.

Zoom Prayer Time

The Zoom Prayer is one of our congregation's groups that came out of the Covid pandemic. It very quickly established itself as a much looked forward to weekly meeting. Now running for nearly 4 years it has far exceeded expectations. From its earliest days some, as would have been expected, have stepped aside from weekly participation. That being said, the majority of participants have remained and have, from its online nature, found it convenient to join from their own homes. Their regular participation has also helped their practice of prayer to develop significantly.

We continue to have one member who joins us from the United States which has added to the richness of the group. The group meets each Thursday evening beginning at 8.30pm and offers prayers of worship, confession, thanksgiving and intercession for ourselves, others, our church and the wider church, and current events in the world. One great outcome has been the opportunity to see prayers being answered both within our own circles and beyond. The beauty of the online platform is that we can cope with any number joining and we would encourage any others within the congregation to feel free to join us.

Sunday School

Little Acorns

Little Acorns Sunday School continues to be a hive of play, worship and learning. Each week we welcome our children into Sunday School by sharing our weekly news before taking time to celebrate any birthdays or special achievements.

We then move onto our weekly lesson and this year we are following the 'Click' Bible lessons which are tailored with language suitable for our young children as well as being packed full of lots of different crafts and activities!

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Once we have completed our lesson, the children are then encouraged to partake in an activity or craft to help cement their learning before engaging with the many different play activities set out which are aimed at encouraging their imagination and curiosity skills.

Whilst our numbers attending Little Acorns Sunday School can vary on a weekly basis, we consider it a real blessing to see every young child come through our doors and we love to welcome each child every week to hear about their news and encourage the beginnings of their journey of faith.

This year we have made some changes to our adult helper system with each lesson being planned and delivered by either Eileen or Nikki but supported by several people from the congregation each week. We are very grateful to each helper for their support and enthusiasm each week!

Our aim in Little Acorns Sunday School continues to be to get our young children excited and interested in learning about the Bible and to understand just how much they are loved and valued.

In December 2023 Little Acorns Sunday School took to the stage to perform our Nativity along with some wonderful help from the Oaks Sunday School. This was a fantastic performance and it was lovely to see the confidence of every child grow as they stepped on the stage.

I continue to be very grateful to the church and all the members for recognising this and supporting us in Sunday School. Every prayer, word of encouragement or smile is always greatly received and appreciated. I also wish to extend my gratitude to the parents of our young children for their support and to all leaders for their hard work and enthusiasm.

Oaks

Our Sunday School classes are now called Acorns (the seeds of faith being sown) and Oaks, (the word deepening and faith growing stronger). 2023 was marked with the addition of more families returning on a regular basis from the end of lockdown and it has been very encouraging to see the little upstairs room almost full every week with P4-P7 aged children (Oaks). Numbers of little ones however have fluctuated and sadly often there are as many leaders as children in Acorns.

Our Sunday Schools are prayed for every week in our church prayer groups. We ask for blessing in the lives of our children and families, we pray for guidance as we plan and deliver teaching which, in our increasingly secular age, needs to be clear, relevant and robust. Prayers have been answered for leaders and there is now a strong team to help each week and a body of volunteers to fill in when required.

The children are curious and eager to learn and we continue to use an explorative and interactive approach to learning the stories of Jesus and the teachings of His word. The Oaks have enjoyed learning about many different (and less well-known) characters in the Bible this year. These have often been challenging and uncomfortable stories to grapple with. They get the chance to meet them in person each week when the 'character' sits on the 'Hot Seat' to be interviewed. We have continued to help them contextualise their learning by inviting the P4-P7 classes to join the congregation to observe our communion services and using their knowledge of the books of the Bible to find the passages read each Sunday Service.

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We continue to love seeing the children from crèche coming to the front each week for the children's address and then out to crèche. We loved that they took part this year in the Nativity and acted and even spoke so well!

In our Nativity this year, the powerful story of Christmas was told in word, song, instrument and even dance. Even the smallest person had a part to play which was wonderful.

It was fantastic to have Soul Star (Bible class) join us in the music roles, and we thank them for being such good role models for the younger children coming behind them.

Two of our Oaks Sunday School members got the opportunity to travel to Senegal and work alongside their parents who were doing a Holiday Bible Club for the children of SiL and Wycliffe workers in the region - what an experience for them to go and then to 'report back' at church when they got home.

We give thanks to God for each child who comes along and we thank families for supporting us too. Looking ahead, we are excited at the opportunities we have here in Ballyholme as we partner with parents in the task of helping to lead boys and girls to love and serve Christ and his church.

Soul Star

Soul Star has a group of 5-6 core members that attend each week. In early January 4 members of Soul Star became communicant members of the church. To allow them to take communion Soul Star doesn't happen during the weeks of communion.

At the start of the year, we finished off the 24/7 prayer course that we started in 2022 which taught the young people different ways to pray to God and allowed time during the sessions to pray. We have also been using the Presbyterian Church in Ireland resource called Bite-size the first booklet in this resource is Identity it gets to the heart of some of life's big questions: Who am I? Who is God? Is God relevant to my daily life?

Each session Enables young people to understand key biblical truths about who they are in light of who God is and what he intends for their lives. The four areas we have looked at are:

- 1: WHO AM I? - We belong to God so our identity lies completely and eternally in Christ.
 - 2: WHO IS GOD? - God is the loving creator and controller of everything – we can trust him.
 - 3: TRINITY - God is a relationship of three persons but one God – we can know him.
 - 4: IMAGE OF GOD - We were created to show God to others and bring glory to him in our lives.
- We hope to continue with the next bit of the resource in 2024.

Each week in Soul Star we always share food and a hot chocolate or apple juice while chatting with everyone and finding out what they have been up to the previous week.

Youth Fellowship

At the beginning of the year, Jonny Farrel from Stand By Me visited us to share about the organisation's global work in providing essential needs. Inspired by this, we took turns sleeping on the floor to raise

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funds for beds in Ethiopia, successfully assisting four families. In February, we teamed up with Ballyholme Parish for a fun outing to watch the Belfast Giants at SSE Arena Belfast. March brought another collaboration with the parish for a youth weekend at Kilbroney Centre, where Rebecca from the organisation, Made for More shared about how Jesus is a good gardener. The weekend included a scavenger hunt in Kilbroney forest park and a campfire with toasted marshmallows. Our youth praise band led worship at each session.

We hosted a Cafe Church event with the Stand By Me team to shed light on their impactful global initiatives. Post-Easter, we indulged in Easter baking and craft-making, including an adventurous attempt at tie-dyeing t-shirts. Our celebrations continued with a lively party on May 7th to mark the Coronation, complete with pizza and homemade buns. As Summer approached, we embraced the warmer weather with outdoor activities like walks to Kingsland Park for ice cream, visits to Groomsport for games and hotdogs, and even a refreshing water fight.

Wrapping up the school year, we organized a delightful BBQ for all members and families cooked by Simon Liggett. After a summer break, we kicked off September with an exciting trip to Let's Go Hydro Aqua Park. During the half-term break, we hosted a series of engaging hangout events featuring various activities, worship led by our youth band, and insightful bible teachings by Andrew Watson from Ballyholme Parish.

December brought festive spirit with Youth Fellowship participating in the Ballyholme Christmas light switch-on event and hosting the Ballyholme Primary School P5 choir for a heartwarming Christmas service. To finish off the year, we attended the Carols by Candlelight service followed by a joyous YF Christmas party featuring plenty of pizza and a lively game of Secret Santa. A heartfelt thank you goes out to all the dedicated leaders who generously volunteer their Sunday evenings to serve at Youth Fellowship.

Throughout the year, our Youth Fellowship group engaged in a variety of activities that brought us closer together and allowed us to make a positive impact on our community. From raising funds for Stand By Me to enjoying outings and events, we shared many memorable moments.

As the seasons changed, so did our activities - from sleeping on the floor to walking in the park, from tie-dye attempts to water fights, each experience brought us closer as a group. We learned about giving back, having fun, and growing together.

As we reflect on the year gone by, we are filled with gratitude for everyone who contributed their time and energy to make our Youth Fellowship a welcoming and enriching space. The memories we created will stay with us for a long time, reminding us of the joy and camaraderie we shared.

As we look ahead to the new year, we are excited for more adventures, more learning, and more opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others. Thank you to all the leaders, members, and supporters who make our Youth Fellowship a special place to belong.

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Flower Guild

During this year, we had a great response to our appeal for new donations and strong support to provide flowers for most Sunday Services. This was through donations of both funds and flowers and we thank all those who contributed and also to a small group of dedicated folks who either arranged flowers, delivered flowers or both. We are truly thankful for all the small ways in which this important process works. Its importance is in the pleasure the distribution of flowers gives to members of our church family and the grateful thanks which they express in being remembered and also in the ways in which people who donate remember loved ones and mark special occasions.

This year we have also given beautiful flowers to celebrate birthday and anniversary milestones and these have been a welcome and special surprise.

We had special flowers for services celebrating Baptisms and at Easter, Harvest and Christmas. The donations at harvest rather than flowers, fruit and vegetables were generous gifts of food and supplies for Storehouse.

We have received many heartfelt thanks for the gift of the flowers after a church service and we thank all those who have enabled that to continue.

Events

2023 has been a very busy and productive year for the Events Team. The Kings Coronation Big Lunch was held after church on Sunday 7 May 2023 raising £800.00 for the People's Kitchen and church funds. The top hall was full to bursting with members of all ages, families and friendship groups enjoying a lovely lunch and fellowship.

On Friday 7 August Fred Lawson, Flo Wilson's grandson, provided us with an evening of beautiful classical and Spanish guitar music in the Church raising £185 for the organ fund.

There was a full house on Sunday 3 September at the Church Barbecue with another opportunity for fellowship and lots of activities for families and friends including a bouncy castle and visits by the Fire Brigade and the Community Police.

An Evening of Song organized by Linda Snell, former professional opera singer, was held on Friday 22 September in the Church with supper provided by the Team. Our sincere thanks to Linda who donated the income of £700 to church funds.

Apple Pie and Cream were provided by the Team for Harvest after church on Sunday 8 October raising £273 for United Appeal.

Our first Christmas Craft Fair in many years was held on Saturday 11 November with over thirty stall holders raising an amazing £2,257. We hope to run this again next year. Cinderella and the three ugly sisters arrived in Ballyholme on Saturday 2 December to the delight of young and old. Great fun and laughter were had by all and £770 was raised once the company was paid.

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Theatrics one of the new groups using the upstairs meeting room on Wednesdays put on a performance in the Church on Friday 8 December and donated £150 to church funds.

The year ended with our Carols by Candlelight service on Sunday 17 December when everyone joined in fellowship to enjoy mince pies and cream and exchange Christmas greetings. Our thanks to the Events Team for all their hard work and contributions over a very busy year and to everyone in the congregation who contributed food, donated, helped us out and supported the various events during 2023.

Storehouse North Down

Storehouse North Down continues to provide a vital service to families in need in our community. This is due in no small part to the dedicated team of workers, volunteers, and supporters.

Storehouse North Down has had another busy 12 months. The cost of living crisis and the rise in energy bills continue to leave a lot of people struggling. Government help with cost of living payments has had some impact as the number of hampers given in 2023 was down slightly from our peak of in 2022. This year we gave out 2035 hampers as opposed to 2205 in 2022. The overall cost of the hampers however increased due to the rise in food prices. In 2023 the value of the hampers given out was £159,463.24 this included 608 Christmas Hampers to a value of £34,337.48. This was our busiest Christmas to date. These hampers continue to include enough food, cleaning products and toiletries to last an individual or a family for a whole week so each hamper consists of an average 7 bags of shopping. Therefore, over the year we have given out approximately 14,245 bags of shopping. The number of individuals that we helped during the year was 4116.

This year Sainsburys at Holywood Exchange donated £750.00 of Childrens Toys to include in our Christmas Hampers.

We are still supported with Fresh food from the farmers in Newtownards and we still receive best before food from Marks & Spencer and Mash direct.

We continue to be blessed with very generous support from local Churches, Schools, Businesses and individuals and we are very grateful for everyone's support.

Ballyholme Presbyterian Church continues to support Storehouse through regular weekly donations of food, toiletries and cleaning products and we have many members of the congregation who give generously of their time, money, and prayerful support. Our "Reverse Advent" project was a great way to support Storehouse and boost greatly depleted "stock" after the Christmas rush.

So many thanks for your continuing generous support throughout the past year.

1 John 3:18

'My children, our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action'.

Thursday Badminton Group

We play from 10.00am until noon on Thursdays.

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We would welcome new members, male or female, of any age or ability. We get a bit of exercise and a very important cuppa. There's always a lot of laughter, do please think about joining us.

New Horizons

New Horizons is pleased to report a very successful year as we all settled back into normality after Covid. We changed the time of our meetings to morning to provide easier parking and most members are happy with that.

During the early part of 2023 we had various speakers including an illustrated talk on Guatemala. This was of special interest as we financially support a young girl from that area.

One of the most popular meetings required audience participation – favourite poems/texts/phrases. We both cried and laughed at some of the many presentations. It was a wonderful meeting as we got to know each other better.

A visit to the Mayor's Parlour in Bangor City Hall was a highlight and we all enjoyed a lovely afternoon tea. Our outing in May was to Ballycopeland Windmill, a conducted tour was included with a light lunch. We were pleased that Peter and Heather were able to join us on this occasion.

Thank you all for your loyalty and encouragement and thanks are due to our dedicated Committee – Audrey, Rosemary, Eileen and Geraldine.

If you wish to join us you will be made most welcome (men and ladies) we meet on the 3rd Monday of the month at 10.30am finishing at 12 noon. Lifts can be arranged by speaking to Muriel.

'In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths'.

Proverbs 3 v 6

Making Mornings

Making Mornings is an organisation within our church, open to anyone who has an interest in any form of craft work such as knitting, crochet, sewing etc. We meet on Wednesday morning from 10am-12noon in the Primary room, where we enjoy sharing our skills and ideas over a cuppa and snack.

At present we remain a small group of about 10 members.

2023 was a very interesting and exciting year for us as a group, as it saw us taking on some new and exciting challenges and expanding our skills within our local community.

The commitment and generosity of our members is second to none as we continue to effortlessly raise funding for worthwhile charities both local and further afield from the sale of our creations.

A total of £1,443 was made throughout the year of which £845 was made solely from our crafting sales.

All of the proceeds from our sales were gifted to our own church funds, and to local charities such as Women's Aid, NI Pancreatic Fund, NI Kidney Research Fund, Store House and People's Kitchen. We also donate knitted/crochet items to Salvation Army, Samaritans Purse and Tiny Life.

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In May, we all celebrated the King's coronation and our talented ladies enjoyed helping by producing some unique knits to help decorate the hall for our Church Family Coronation Lunch. Our own knitted King Charles and Queen Camilla welcomed everyone at the door!

After the summer break we started on a new project. We had been approached by Santa the previous Christmas to ask us if we could do a topper for our local Postbox at Ballyholme. Needless to say this challenge was met with great excitement and enthusiasm and was effortlessly designed and completed in time for the Christmas light switch on in Ballyholme. We were all completely overwhelmed by the attention and reaction this nativity scene topper received within our own community and we quickly gained quite a large following on social media. We were delighted that our Making Mornings Group had helped to portray the true meaning of Christmas through our talents.

In November we had a table at our church Christmas Craft Sale and we're able to raise £490 towards our church funds. At the end of June we had a lunch outing to Ballycopeland Windmill which we all enjoyed especially as the sun was shining.

In early December we had our annual Christmas dinner at Pier 36 and was a great way to celebrate our achievements throughout the year and look forward to new challenges for the coming year.

Bowling Club

The Indoor Bowling Club meets every Tuesday night at 7.30pm. This has always been a very enjoyable night and this year was no exception. We play friendly games and have good fun. We are hopeful that we can attract new members. At the end of the season last year the club members went out for a meal, this was a very successful night.

The club has some spare bowls if anyone would like to come along and try some bowling. You will be made very welcome.

Parent & Toddlers

Ballyholme Presbyterian Parent & Toddler group have enjoyed another year of friendships being formed and along with a cuppa and a lot of friendly chat.

Friday mornings continue to be a hub of activity starting at 10.00am and finishing at 11.30am with children and adults singing rhymes, this is a fun, lively time. My thanks to one of our mums for offering to take this activity. The children learn to socialize with each other and are offered a large variety of toys, crafts, jigsaws and physical equipment to help stimulate their development.

At the end of each term the children have a party and at Christmas we have a special visitor, Santa, who gives each child a small gift. At the end of the summer term when we are saying goodbye to some of the parents and children we provide a book for each child.

During the year from the donations we receive each week, we were able to provide flowers for the Communion Table, contribute to heat/light and give a donation to support our Youth Work.

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All this would not be possible except for the small team of volunteers from our church family who come along every Friday and help in so many different ways to make it the success it is. My thanks to all who give sterling service on Friday mornings.

We hope all who come along find Parent & Toddlers a place of welcome and sense the presence of God's love. We pray God will continue to bless this work in our church.

Ladies Group

Our Ladies Group continues to meet on the first Wednesday of every month from 7:30-9:00pm.

In November we welcomed Lady Sylvia Hermon who told us of her early life and also gave an insight into her political career. Around 50 ladies attended and also enjoyed a question time at the end.

Our Christmas evening in December was definitely a highlight so far. One of our members, Dawn, gave a superb demonstration on how to ice and decorate Christmas cakes. Congratulations to Lynne, Audrey and Karen who each won a beautifully decorated cake to take home. We also had a surprise visit from Santa who distributed presents. Thanks to our friends from Making Mornings who gave a gift to each lady. Resulting from this, a donation was made to The People's Kitchen in Belfast. Our evening was made even more special as Ellie sang and played for us. Thank you to everyone involved for making it a great evening.

One of the most important parts of each evening is the coffee and biscuits at the end. It is lovely to see new faces and people chatting and getting to know each other.

Again, our thanks to Julie for her monthly reflexology sessions which have proved to be very popular.

Mens Ministry Group

Our new Mens Ministry Group continued to meet on a monthly basis during 2023. We had several very interesting speakers including David McManus from Air Ambulance NI, David McGinty (Management Consultant and former Royal Marine), Lady Sylvia Hermon, Brian Meharg from RNLI, Stephen Cameron (speaking about the Patricia Curran murder) and Sam Wolfenden (speaking about lessons from history).

We also enjoyed trips to the private cinema in Helen's Bay for a special screening of Hacksaw Ridge and a very informative tour of the Somme Museum. The year was completed with a delicious Christmas Dinner at The Esplanade followed by an entertaining talk from local journalist and author, Ivan Little – who really was phenomenal! Thank you to everyone for attending the meetings and I would extend an invitation to all men in the congregation to come along to enjoy the fellowship and craic.

Special thanks to Graham and his very capable deputies for keeping us well supplied with tea, coffee and treats.

Preschool

The children returned from their Christmas holidays, and we went straight into our "Signs of Winter theme." The children made snowmen and we played with Ice. However, it was so cold we stayed

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inside. The admissions for next year intake opened for the whole of January and due to a low birth rate we only filled 21 places, and we were able to take Pre Pre children this year.

The first term was busy, and we covered themes “All about me, Transport, and shapes.” Our themes of play are well thought out, creative and educational. The individual requirements of children with additional needs are carefully integrated into the daily plans.

Preschool has a good structure, with free play in the morning. Children have options including playing in a sectioned off area for physical play, role play, construction, art, craft, sand, dough, and water play. Snacking is a sociable experience for the children.

Before our half term break, we had our annual Social Services inspection; we were inspected on “Quality of Care – Part 2” The inspection went well with no recommendation for improvement.

As the weather improved, we were able to take the children outside to play, we calmly asked the children to get on their coats and we offer praise for completing the task themselves and lining up. The outdoor area is always checked for any potential hazards before use. We have several trikes and scooters, slide, seesaw, balancing beam, wooden kitchen, and musical instruments. We will space ourselves well outside to ensure a good level of supervision.

Children have songs/rhymes and story time before going home.

We held our annual open day in June and the new intake for September came to preschool to meet the preschool staff. We were also able to go on our annual outing to Springvale Farm.

In September the Key workers were assigned to the new children, and we set about our 3-week settling in routine. We got to know our new children and they got to know us. The preparations for the Nativity in December went well and we decided to hold the Nativity in the top hall, using the stage. The children enjoyed singing the songs and the Nativity was held on 22nd December 2023. The staff/children’s interactions are always warm and positive. There is a lot of praise offered by the staff. Staff carry out regular observations of the children during play and we use this information to identify the next steps in learning.

The preschool provides a valuable service to the local community and maintains high numbers of registered children.

7th Bangor Rainbows

On Friday evenings between 6pm and 7pm, the lower Erskine Hall is filled with a sea of red as the 7th Bangor Rainbow troop descend for their weekly meeting!

Rainbows continues to be a place where girls aged 4-7 years are welcomed into the world of Girlguiding and take their first steps into what we hope is a lifelong affiliation with such a wonderful organisation.

Rainbows continues to grow in numbers and this year we currently have 25 girls on our register. It is wonderful to be able to see first-hand how the girls grow emotionally (and physically) during their 3 years with us.

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We continue to make great memories on Friday evenings in the lower hall where we have great fun playing games, making crafts and of course making lots of friendships! It is wonderful to see each girl come back week after week with a smile on their face, excited to see their friends and learn something new!

We continue to be ever grateful to Ballyholme Presbyterian Church for the use of their hall and for the support from the congregation. Special thanks also go to all of the dedicated team of leaders who have shown great commitment and enthusiasm, rarely missing a Friday night.

7th Bangor Brownies

At the beginning of the year three girls 'moved up' from Rainbows and two new starts joined, making a group of 21 Brownies.

A full and varied schedule of work though the year for the badge programme resulted in the girls gaining the Charities Interest badge, Explore (from Have Adventures section) and Influence (from Take Action section).

For the Friendship theme for the Thinking Day Service on 5th March the girls made bracelets and practiced Brownie Bells:

O Lord our God Your children call,
Grant us Your peace and bless us all.

On the day, they sang this to 'shaker' accompaniment. All who came enjoyed the special guest Milo - a springer spaniel trained to enliven the Bible's message.

The annual sponsored Lorne Walk event, last held in 2018, took place in April. We walked along the coastal path from Crawfordsburn Country park, whilst using a scavenger hunt sheet to keep us going to our destination Lorne Girlguiding Ulster HQ. There we ate our packed lunches and finished off with smores and a campfire singsong. Money raised went to Girlguiding Ulster and our Brownie group.

On the evening of Friday 5th May the usual meetings of Brownies, Rainbows, Guides and Rangers were repurposed for a King Charles Coronation party. The Girlguiding groups who usually meet in Groomsport joined with us and the leaders provided a variety of activities: crafts, disco, facepainting, temporary tattoos and a buffet of sweet stuff. Everyone left with a themed goodie bag including a specially designed badge.

Two Brownies left at the end of the year and have joined Guides.

In the Autumn five girls moved up from Rainbows and two new girls started and so our group grew to 26. This resulted in a tight squeeze into the room upstairs to learn the dance from the Barbie movie at the start of the new term.

For the first time we met at the cinema in Newtownards on 9th December to attend a specially organised screening of Disney's Wish, which, along with drinks and popcorn, was enjoyed by all, and everyone received a badge.

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Thanks to the dedicated volunteers, including a young leader-in-training and the young helper Guides, who lead, prepare, join in, and deliver the programme at each weekly meeting.

7th Bangor Guides

Guides continue to meet in the Erskine Hall every Friday from 7.45-9.30 pm. We provide a varied range of activities, including badgework, games, cookery, quizzes as well as outings, camps and indoor residential.

As is our custom, we started the year off by attending the pantomime at Bangor Abbey, which this year was Treasure Island.

Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers made a colourful addition to the congregation at our Thinking Day Service at the beginning of March. It was lovely to be back in church again after an absence of 2 years due to Covid restrictions. Friendship was the theme and we were joined by David and Amy, who brought their three springer spaniels, Milo, Grace and Hope. These dogs are trained by their owners to bring the gospel message through obedience tasks and tricks. Young and old in the congregation were enthralled and amused by the skills shown and it was interesting to hear and see the truths of the gospel brought in a different way. Also it was a great illustration of friendship, loyalty and trust. Four girls were presented with the Guide Gold Award. Three of these had missed out on receiving certificates, due to lockdowns, so it was lovely to have them at this service. One of the girls had moved on to our Rangers and the other two were helping with Brownies in another church. The other girl had just finished the Gold Award the previous Friday, so she was presented with both certificate and badge. She is now a Young Leader with us. We are always delighted to see our girls achieving. The Nan McKillen Award, the annual Thinking Day Competition for our Guide patrols was presented to Dolphin Patrol.

Mother's Day gifts were made and we continued with Guide programme activities over the next few weeks, concluding with meaningful Easter activities.

In our Church Halls on Friday 5 May 7th Bangor Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers joined with the units from 1st Groomsport to hold a King Charles III Coronation Party. This included crafts, food, disco, nail art and face painting.

Also in May, a trip to Dundonald for ten-pin bowling was enjoyed.

On a very warm Saturday 3 June, after an absence of a few years, we once again entered a six-member patrol for our County outdoor competition, the Ewing-Johnston Challenge, which was held at Crawfordsburn Scout Campsite. We weren't placed, but the girls had fun and it was good experience for them. After the Challenge, two more of our girls arrived and we, along with 3rd Holywood Guides, slept overnight at the site, lovely and cosy in our tents.

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Our usual, much-enjoyed, final evening at Lorne in June before the summer break, with each girl cooking on her own open fire, was highlighted by four Outdoor Cooking badges being gained. We finished with campfire singing round one of the fires and three girls said their Promise for the first time.

We held a three-night camp at Lorne 10-13 August, which was blessed by mostly good weather, until we were about to take the tents down, when it rained heavily! This meant leaving the tents on site and a trip back to Lorne by one of the leaders a couple of days later when the weather had improved to finally get them taken down, packed up and brought home. Despite this, it was lovely spending a few days living in the outdoors, enjoying meals cooked on an open fire. During this camp we took a trip on the train to Lisburn for water fun at Lagan Valley Leisureplex, which the girls always enjoy.

We were pleased that several new girls joined us in September, some from Brownies and some who brought friends.

The popular Army Skills Builder Day, run by Girlguiding Ulster and the Army, was held in Palace Barracks at the beginning of October and three of our girls attended, along with the two leaders. The girls took part in leadership activities, First Aid, healthy camp skills, fixing activities including basic car maintenance.

During our Harvest Party in October, the girls came dressed as farmers and we all enjoyed an evening of harvest-themed games and activities, finishing with hot chocolate and campfire singing.

In November, we joined many other organisations taking part in the Remembrance Sunday Service in Ward Park and after the service paraded round Bangor. We also provided a flag bearer for our service in church.

Activities involving food are always popular and during the year we made butter, jambons, crispie buns and s'mores. We relaxed on one occasion by blowing bubbles. We completed several fun badges – Butterfly Challenge, Seahorse Challenge and ABC Challenge. We also had two of our Rangers visit our meeting on a couple of occasions to demonstrate First Aid.

It is pleasing to see the girls loyally attending each week. We are always glad to welcome new members. Please continue to hold us in your prayers.

7th Bangor Rangers

This year we had lots of outings, things to celebrate and the unit is continuing to thrive. We kickstarted the year with a winter residential at Lorne where the girls undertook many activities including climbing, abseiling, team building and a pizza party! We also had several new members make their promises around a campfire in the dark of night and we had a campfire singalong to celebrate. This was a great weekend for the girls to let their hair down and relax before exam season started.

During the Spring term we focused on community action and helping the community so we spent a night at Tesco collecting supplies for the Bangor Foodbank and then spent another night visiting the premises of the Bangor Foodbank learning all about how they help the community and where our

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donations would be going. It is such a brilliant facility, and the girls were surprised to see how much the centre does to provides for the community.

In May the Rangers came together with the rest of the sections in Ballyholme and Groomsport for a special coronation party to celebrate our new King. The Rangers helped man all the stations which included face painting, crafts, supervising the tea party and providing a disco and dance for the young sections. They all did a fabulous job at helping and were great role models for the younger sections to look up to. For our last night of term before summer and a new Guiding year, we had our first ever sleepover in the church halls which the girls were really looking forward to! We had pizza, lots of snacks, did some crafts and watched some movies. It was really relaxing and the perfect way to end the term.

We were thrown into September with lots planned including filling Christmas shoeboxes for Samaritans Purse, an escape room, a night in Karly's salon in Ballyholme learning how to style hair and a trip to Palace Barracks for an Army Skills day. In October, we had 4 Rangers complete an abseil down the Europa hotel to raise money for both the unit and for charity - they were very, very brave for doing this!

Two great events concluded our 2023 year, the first of which was our annual visit to the Stormont Parliament Buildings as part of 'UK Parliament Week' organised by Girlguiding Ulster, where the girls got a tour of Stormont as well as having a Q&A with several local MLAs. The last event of the year was the long-awaited county trip to the Waterfront pantomime to see 'Rapunzel' with over 150 girls and leaders and included lots of singing, dancing and shouting, the girls had an absolute ball and of course there was even a badge! We are looking forward to the year ahead as our unit continues to grow and flourish.

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.

Rev Peter Lyle