

**CONLIG CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN
IRELAND**

**Trustees Annual Report
for the year ended 31 December 2023**

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC105279)

**CONLIG CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND
TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT**

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

Conlig Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland
4 Main Street
Conlig
BT23 7PT

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC105279)

CHARITY TRUSTEES

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

Gail Carr (from 29 March 2023)	Sheena McIlpatrick
Cecil Connell	Brian Morrison
John Donaldson (from 29 March 2023)	Lynda-Jane Nelson (from 29 March 2023)
Ronnie Maxwell	Derek Prentice
Rev. John McConaghie	Edith Savage

PRINCIPAL OFFICE BEARERS

Minister	Rev. John McConaghie
Clerk of Session	Brian Morrison
Treasurer	Edith Savage

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

David Hooks
250 Donaghadee Road
Bangor,
BT19 6NH

BANKERS

Ulster Bank
Killeen Avenue
Bangor BT19 1ND

Progressive Building Society
6 Castle Street
Bangor BT20 4ST

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STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT

Trustees

The members of the Kirk Session (elders) are the charity trustees of the congregation. Under the congregation's governing document, The Code, the book of the constitution and government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI), 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.

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 General Assembly consists of the active ministers of each congregation, retired ministers and a representative elder, appointed each year, from each congregation. Edith Savage was the congregation's representative elder in 2023.

Presbytery

Under the Presbyterian Church in Ireland form of governance the corporate oversight of a congregation is the responsibility of a Presbytery which superintends the spiritual and temporal affairs of the congregations assigned to it. The membership of the Presbytery consists of the active ministers of congregations assigned to it, ministers who have retired from active duty and an elder appointed by the Kirk Session of the congregation. PCI has assigned Conlig congregation to the Ards Presbytery. Brian Morrison is the congregation's representative elder to the Presbytery. The Presbytery provides an important link between the congregation and the wider structures of the church.

Kirk Session

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 minister in active duty in the congregation, has no deliberative but only a casting vote. Stated meetings of the Conlig Kirk Session are normally held every second month with a vision and planning meeting on the alternate month. Session held stated meetings in January, February, March, June, September, and November.

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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. The congregation then elects those who obtain approval from two-thirds of those who vote. Three new elders, Gail Carr, John Donaldson, and Lynda-Jane Nelson were ordained and installed by the Ards Presbytery on 29 March 2023.

Church Committee

The Church Congregational Committee is responsible for the temporal affairs of the congregation including administering the congregational Property Fund. Members of the Kirk Session are ex-officio members of the Congregational Committee. The congregation elects members of the committee from its list of voters. To be an eligible voter a person must be a communicant member and qualify by means of a contribution to the congregation's General Fund. All purchasing, installing, and modifying of property must be paid from the Property Fund and within the limits of that fund. The General Fund is only to be used for purposes directly approved by the Trustees.

THE CONGREGATION

The charitable purpose of the congregation is the advancement of religion. As a congregation of PCI, we are a Reformed Church within the wider body of Christ, grounded in the Scriptures and exist to love and honour God through faith in His Son and by the power of His Spirit, and to enable members to play their part in fulfilling God's mission to our world.

The congregation's mission purpose is to reach up to God, reach out in mission and to reach inward by discipleship, which is: increasingly characterised by love for God, and love and concern for others; committed to the historic Christian gospel as revealed in the Bible and 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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Everything we do should point upwards to God, we must look inward to see how we disciple our people and reach outward in mission. As we do this, we try to promote a loving culture which is evident to all. Our discipleship comes through preaching, leadership development and the work of our elders. Our outreach involves communication, pastoral care, community events and a Holiday Bible Club.

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 three occasions during the year. All those who have been baptised and who have made a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are admitted to partake. We hold a weekly bible study and prayer meeting (Mid Week Connection) and an Alpha course. Our children and youth are taught through our SHINE and EPIC groups. Our Craft Group meets weekly, and Oasis organises a weekly open morning. Embrace and the Friendship Circle meet monthly. All of these provide an opportunity for fellowship in our membership and outreach to the wider community. Our church family is a place of welcome and a place where, love, help, and support can be found. Everything we do points one another to God and the love He has for us. As a church we believe that prayer is the foundation of all we do.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Worship and Prayer

The congregation met for worship each Sunday at 11.00 am. We worshiped as a church family with young families encouraged to attend via the League of Church Loyalty. Around seventy persons of all ages attended each week. As of 31 December 2023, there were eighty-four communicant members and 149 families connected with the congregation. We held prayer times each Friday morning and before the start of our Sunday service.

Each Sunday our worship was led by our praise team which included two of our elders, Lynda-Jane and John, our organists June and Sheena along with Kerry, our flute player. Our worship leader, Lynda-Jane Nelson organised and led the choir for special services including Evening Services, Easter, Elder Installation, Harvest, Remembrance, Christmas, and our 175-year opening and closing ceremonies. The choir met on Tuesday evenings and rehearsals provided a time for worship, fellowship, and friendship through the medium of song.

Midweek Connection

The Midweek Connection group met on Thursday evenings where everyone was welcome. We explored and studied, the Bible, in an encouraging and informal setting. The studies were related to the Sunday

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TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (cont'd)

morning sermon or followed a bible study resource. Over the year it was wonderful to see all who attended, grow closer to God, grow in their faith, and get to know one another. The group provided a place where much needed support could be found, with different opinions shared and discussed. A vital part of meeting together was time spent in prayer, for individuals, events and organisations and our local community.

Alpha Course

Alpha is a series of interactive discussions to discuss life and Christian faith in a friendly informal environment. It contains fifteen talks with each talk looking at a different aspect of Christianity. Within the church we now run Alpha annually beginning in October. This year we had a mix of people, some who had attended Alpha before and others who were coming along for the first time. As always the discussions led to interesting and thoughtful questions which helped everyone along their journey of faith. Attendance this year was smaller than before but everyone benefited greatly and agreed they had discovered new things about being a Christian and also about themselves.

Youth Biblical Teaching

SHINE, our organisation for children of primary school age, met during morning services. It taught children bible stories at an age-appropriate level. We had a core group of around twenty-three children and seven teachers. The children engaged very well in the weekly activities of praise and worship, games, stories, and craft. In September we began working through God's Big Promises Story Book. The children continued to be a constant source of joy and encouragement to the leaders. The teachers found it such a blessing to be able to chat with them each week and pray through any worries the children had for the week ahead.

Our **Holiday Bible Club (HBC)** took place over three nights in late May and a Sunday morning service. We had around thirty children attending each night. HBC provided an opportunity for us to attract children from the local community and bring them under the word of God and Bible teaching. There was lots of noise and excitement around at HBC, and the children especially engaged in the singing. Our prayer is that these words of worship will be embedded into their young hearts and minds as they sang and learned about God's Truths.

Everything is Possible in Christ (EPIC), our youth group of teenagers ranging from 11- to 16-year-olds met up on Sunday mornings. Our main objective was to try and reinforce the message of God's love for the young people and for them to know the importance of prayer in their lives. On a monthly basis the sessions included a Breakfast and Bibles week, a Something Different week and a guest speaker. Our Biblical topic for the 2023/24 year was Miracles, with studies covering both the Old and New Testament. During our Something Different week EPIC members enjoyed making coasters, poppies, and pancakes in

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addition to having a blind tasting week, all underpinned with a Biblical theme. Guest speakers have been from Young Life, Scripture Union NI, Leprosy Mission, Bible Society NI and PCI. Outside of a Sunday morning, EPIC members enjoyed fellowship and fun making a Christmas music video during a pizza night.

EPIC was successful in securing funding from a Tesco Community Grant which enabled the group to purchase a laptop. The group also received funding from a Power NI Helping Hands Grant, which will be used to fund a team building activity day in 2024.

Pastoral Care

Our Pastoral Care team helped our minister in home visits to elderly members of our congregation, some of whom were no longer able to attend church. These visits served to keep a connection to our church family and supported our elders in their responsibilities for those families under their care. Comprising seven volunteers, the Pastoral Team provided practical assistance such as organising meals during hospital stays and emotional support at times of loss. The team also offered spiritual support through prayer.

Mission and Outreach

At a local level, the congregation was actively involved with the Conlig Community Regeneration Group and engaged in outreach through our organisations. We provided accommodation for Praxis (an organisation for people with learning disabilities) and gave support to Storehouse via a grocery box in our vestibule.

The congregation contributed its 'Target of Honour' to the United Appeal for Mission which is a central fund of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. This fund enabled us to support the wider mission of the denomination and to do mission and outreach on a denominational basis beyond what we could have done on our own. The fund provided financial aid for mission personnel at home and overseas, assisted congregations with the deployment of locally based staff, enabled church planting, provided grant support for the upkeep of church premises, and assisted with the running costs of Union Theological College (the Church's training college). It also financially supported congregations in the areas of worship, discipleship, global mission, outreach, leadership, and pastoral care. Our congregation also contributed to the denomination's annual World Development appeal.

We have been supporting Kids4School, a NI charity which helps to provide education and housing for children in Tanzania, for over twelve years. In 2022 we had a visit from a Kids4School representative who highlighted the need for replacement dwellings. This gave us an idea for a church project and so the "100s" project was born. As a church we felt we could take on a challenge to raise the funds needed to build one house in Tanzania, through a project that would involve all members. On Saturday 27 May

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2023 our Minister and an EPIC leader, with the fantastic support of North Down Cycling Club, completed a 100-mile cycle ride. Back in Conlig, volunteers queued up to ride a static bike for 100 miles and the children completed 100 laps of the car park.

From the generosity of the church members, their friends, and contacts, we collected a massive £18,000 to build three houses and several water tanks. In monetary terms the project was a huge success, but also in terms of church and community involvement. Other charities supported by the congregation were the British Legion Poppy Appeal, Childrens Hospice, Christian Aid, European Christian Mission, Fonic Trust, Leprosy Mission (NI), Salvation Army and Samaritans Purse.

Property

The Church Committee conducted significant maintenance to our property by means of a Church Maintenance team. A specialist restoration contractor progressed essential work to the roof, bell tower, and rear chimney. The contractor should complete this work in 2024.

Organisations

Our **Craft Group** provided social interaction for ladies in the congregation and local community. It also created items for sale and, with weekly donations, raised funds for our church and charity.

Embrace, a group of around 15-20 ladies of from our church family ranging in age from thirty to seventy plus, met once a month. Meetings ranging from a coffee night out to hearing from an invited speaker. Embrace brought encouragement and provided a safe environment for ladies to share together. The group organised a Craft Fair in November to raise money for charity and church funds. A real encouragement from this group was the friendships that have been formed beyond church life.

The **Oasis** café operated on Friday mornings from 10.30 am to 12.30 pm in the Minor Hall. We provided complimentary tea and coffee alongside fresh scones and biscuits. Originally opened as a temporary 'warm space' in January 2023, Oasis evolved into a regular weekly event. We were supported by a dedicated team of volunteers who helped each week, not only with practical tasks but also by engaging with our visitors. This allowed us to provide support and offer encouragement to those facing challenges. Oasis presented a drop-in space for our church members, Praxis service users, and the broader community, in a friendly and inclusive atmosphere.

The **Friendship Circle** met monthly from January to May and from September to December. We had a musician or speaker to lead us in song and the word of God. Each afternoon concluded with refreshments and informal fellowship. Attendance varied dependent on weather conditions, with above 40 people attending on at least one afternoon. The majority were over 70 years of age.

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175 Year Celebrations

September 2023 marked the 175th year of our church building. We celebrated this with a month-long programme of activities. We were indebted to Heather Lyons for leading a small team to mount a large exhibition, on the final weekend, featuring events over almost eighteen decades. This was followed by an evening musical concert on Friday 6th October. A special service took place on Sunday 8th October when our previous four ministers, and/or their wives, joined us and participated in the service.

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 or other church activities.

PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

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

The direct benefits include the gaining of an understanding in Christian beliefs as set out in the Bible and 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).

Public access is made known using noticeboards, printed material, and social media. The benefits are demonstrated through regular evaluation of the services, together with informal and ad-hoc feedback from members, and the public.

The purpose does not lead to harm. The only private benefit flowing from our purpose is related to our Minister. However, this is incidental and necessary in order to further our charitable purpose. There are no other private benefits. The main beneficiaries of this purpose are members, their families, other individuals that the congregation is in direct and indirect contact within the community in which pastoral services are provided. Others 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.

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FINANCIAL REVIEW

The congregation's main source of income is from members' contributions by monthly bank transfer or through Weekly Freewill Offering envelopes to its General Fund. There were 105 (109 in 2022) contributors to this General Fund, by these means, donating a total of £73,315 (£55,357 in 2022). Total income of the congregation during the year was £129,983, an increase from £98,672 in 2022. Total expenditure increased from £91,442 in 2022 to £123,925 in 2023. The special fundraising project for building houses in Tanzania was a significant factor in this increase.

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 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.

Approved by the Kirk Session at a meeting on 20 March 2024 and signed on its behalf by



Reverend T J McConaghie



Brian Morrison