

## **First Ballymoney 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**

First Ballymoney Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
Meetinghouse Street, Ballymoney, BT53 6JN

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC105385)

#### **Charity Trustees**

The Charity Trustees who served during the year or who were trustees at the date of this report were: - Rev Stephen McCracken, David Adams, Darren Brewster, Andrea Carton, Heather Dunbar, Lynn Edwards, Derek Hamilton, Debbie Knight, Elaine Lee, Helen Murray, Jeremy Murray, Derek McFarland, Lesley Owens, Trefor Owens, Tracy Peden, John Peden, Neil Robinson and Mandy Walker.

#### **Principal Office Bearers**

Minister                      Rev Stephen McCracken  
Clerk of Session Neil Robinson  
Treasurer                    Elaine Lee

#### **Independent Examiner**

Edwin McLaughlin, D. T. Carson & Co., Chartered Accountants, 51-51 Thomas Street, Ballymena, BT43 6AZ

#### **Bankers**

Ulster Bank, Coleraine Branch, 30 The Diamond Coleraine BT52 1DP

#### **Solicitors**

Greer Hamilton Gailey Solicitors 25-27 High Street, Ballymoney, BT53 6AJ

## **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 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 minister in active duty in the congregation, has no deliberative but only a casting vote.

Stated meetings of the Kirk Session are held at least six in each year or as appropriate.

To be chosen for the office of the eldership in the congregation a person must be a voting member and a regular attendant on its ordinances. The selection of those proposed to be called to the office can be either by the congregation or by the Kirk Session. Members are elected if they obtain two-thirds of those who vote.

### **Presbytery**

Under the Presbyterian Church in Ireland form of governance the corporate oversight of a congregation is the responsibility of a Presbytery, which superintends generally the spiritual and temporal affairs of the congregations assigned to it by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. First Ballymoney Congregation of the Presbyterian Church has been assigned to the Route Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The membership of the Presbytery consists mainly of the active ministers of congregations assigned to it by the General Assembly, ministers who have retired from active duty and an elder appointed by the Kirk Session of the congregation.

### **The General Assembly**

The General Assembly is the supreme court of the Church, representing in one body the whole Church and acting as its supreme legislative, administration and judicial authority, in dealing with all matters brought before it. The General Assembly is normally constituted during the first week in June for worship and to conduct its business. At the end of business, it is dissolved. The membership of the General Assembly consists mainly of the active ministers of each congregation, retired ministers and a representative elder appointed by the Kirk Session of each congregation.

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## DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

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

First Ballymoney 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 the His Spirit and to enable her members to play their part in fulfilling God's mission to our world.

The congregation's mission purpose is to be a body of people called to show God's love and tell of His grace in this place and time, so that others will become followers of Jesus.

We value:

**Prayer** – We believe in the transforming power of private, family and corporate prayer. When the Church prays amazing things happen.

**Worship** – We want to love, honour and glorify God through faith in His Son and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**People** – We believe that people matter to God; He loves us passionately, He pursues us relentlessly and He will never let us go. Therefore, people matter to us; we want to be a caring and compassionate community in action.

**Teaching** – We believe in all matters of faith and practice, scripture is the final authority and is the catalyst for change in our lives, church and community.

**Outreach** – We want to support local and global mission in our prayers, financial giving, education, and personal involvement.

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 towards Him and towards 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 Bible is the supreme authority over all we do and that the Westminster Confession of Faith, along with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms set out what we understand the Bible teaches on key matters of Christian faith and practice.

## **ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES**

The congregation meets for worship every Sunday and visitors are welcome to join. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is observed on a number of 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 including –

- First Friends [Monday Mother & Toddlers Group]
- First Friends [Sunday Creche]
- Jigsaw [Sunday School]
- Journeyers [Bible Class]
- Life Groups
- Meeting House [Seniors Group]
- Prayer Meeting
- Women @ First [PW]
- Youth Club
- Youth Fellowship
- \* Boys Brigade [Joint Company]

## **ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

### **Worship and Prayer**

The congregation normally meets for worship each Sunday at 11.00am and a monthly 6.30pm from September to June. Prior to morning worship there is a time for prayer. Every second and fourth week per month there are midweek Life Groups meeting on Tuesday evening, Wednesday morning and Wednesday evening providing an opportunity for members to meet together for fellowship, to study the scriptures and for a time of prayer.

During the year there were

- ( 0 ) Sacraments of Baptism.
- ( 0 ) Marriage Services
- ( 0 ) New Communicant Members
- ( 1 ) New members/ families.

Every bereavement is a great loss to a family and our church fellowship. We gave thanks for faithful service and sought to comfort those who had been bereaved during the year.

At 31 December 2023 the average weekly attendance at morning worship is (125) persons

## **Prayer Ministry**

Prayer is at the heart of every Christian community and praying for each other is an act of love. We believe that people matter to God and in the transforming power of private, family and corporate prayer for our needs and the needs of others.

We encourage prayer within the various mid-week Life groups as well as in individual situations. We hold a weekly prayer time prior to our Sunday worship service. An Easter Prayer Room runs from Good Friday to Resurrection Sunday and is an opportunity for members to reflect and pray in our church in the light of Easter.

## **Pastoral Care**

Members of the congregation who are unable to attend church due to sickness or age, are visited on a regular basis by the minister, elders or church members.

## **Mission and Outreach**

### **The Warm Room**

This is an invitation to anyone within the church membership and the wider community to come along to the halls on the Fourth Monday of the Month between 2pm and 4pm for a cup of tea or coffee to enjoy company and chat in a warm and welcoming environment.

At a local level the congregation is actively involved in loving and serving the people of Ballymoney, prayerfully, financially, raising awareness and serving with other volunteers. Sometimes the congregation acts alone, whilst at other times the congregation partners with other churches and charities. Our endeavours at a local level during 2023 include supporting:

- Ballymoney Foodbank – supporting those without food by ways of foodstuffs toiletries and essentials left at collection points within the Church.
- CAP [Christians Against Poverty] – supporting people in poverty and when unemployed.
- Schools Ministry – Visits by our Minister and our Youth and Community Co-Ordinator
- Community Carol Service which is attended by our Minister and members of the congregation each year.

The congregation supports the United Appeal for Mission, which is a central fund of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. This fund enables congregations to support the wider mission of the denomination and to do mission and outreach on a denominational basis beyond what the congregation could do on its own. The United Appeal Fund provides financial support for mission personnel at home and overseas, assists congregations with the deployment of locally based staff, enables church planting, provides grant support for the upkeep of church premises, assists with the running costs of Union Theological College, the

Church's training college for ministry students and financially supports congregations in areas of worship, discipleship, global mission, outreach, leadership and pastoral care.

In addition the congregation continues to support the World Development Appeal which is an annual initiative of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland that focuses on helping people trapped in poverty. It endeavours to change lives and communities for the better by channelling resources in support of sustainable development projects in every continent. This work is taken forward through PCI's development partners, Christian Aid and Tearfund. PCI congregations are encouraged to highlight the World Development Appeal during the Advent and Christmas period.

### **Presbytery**

The congregation was represented at the regular meetings of Presbytery by our minister and one of the elders. This provides an important link between the congregations and the wider structures of the church.

### **General Assembly**

Our Minister, Youth and Community Co-Ordinator and a nominated elder attended the meeting of the General assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland held in Assembly Buildings, Belfast, in June 2023.

### **Property**

During the year periodic inspections and maintenance checks were carried out by authorised professional services to inspect and report on safety and upkeep of the church properties.

### **Organisations**

#### **First Friends Creche**

Creche runs on Sunday morning during the service for children aged 0 to 3 years and is supervised by a parent and or volunteer depending on numbers. Creche currently meets in the Session Room in an area set up for play with toys. There is also an opportunity to join in with some of Jigsaw activities listening to bible stories, singing craft and games.

#### **First Friends Tots' Group**

First Friends Tots meet on Monday mornings for approximately 90 minutes during term time. There is a varied range of activities including free-play, games, rhymes, song, story time, crafts and snack time. This Group is open to parents with infants ages 0 to 3 years from within our congregation and the wider community. Parents can enjoy a cup of tea or coffee and fellowship while the children play with the various toys and take part in bible-

based craft. There is also a story and song session to close each week. The aim is to offer a venue to meet and make friends in a welcoming safe environment. At the end of each term there is a party with special games and treats.

### **Jigsaw**

Jigsaw is our children's ministry group for boys and girls from 4 – 11 years old. The children meet in the Session Room during our Sunday morning service. The leaders are currently using 'The Gospel Project for Kids' as their curriculum material, which takes children on a Christ-centred chronological journey through the Bible.

Every week we enjoy worship, Bible stories, prayer, craft, drama, games and small group study not forgetting snack time! Our aim is to help our children understand the essential doctrines of our faith and to realise that the Bible is not a collection of stories but God's unified story of redemption.

Jigsaw began the 2023-2024 year with a visit from Fun with Drums, a craft morning and some baking.

In October 2023 many of our children and their friends enjoyed the Light Party.

They finished the 2023 year with some festive celebrations joining Journeyers to have a Christmas Party. The children also contributed to one of the Christmas Services with their performance of The Christmas Alphabet.

Throughout the year there are also monthly altogether family services when everyone is in church.

### **Journeyers**

Journeyers is a weekly Sunday morning ministry which runs alongside the morning church service aimed at those in the junior side of secondary school. The focus is to spend time studying and discussing the life of Jesus from one of the four Gospel accounts. January to June was spent working through key passages in John's Gospel based on a resource from the Gospel Coalition called 'Knowing the Bible : John'. September to December was spent using the 'Uncover Mark' resource from UCCF (universities and colleges Christian fellowship) as a guide design sessions.

In total there have been approximately ten young people involved throughout the year with an average of five per week.

### **LIFE GROUPS**

Life Groups met this year on Tuesday evenings, and on Wednesday mornings and evenings. We used a variety of locations – rooms in the church buildings, people's homes, and on Zoom, so there was a time and location to suit many preferences.

In the Spring term we started off looking at the letter of 1 Peter, simply reading a chapter together and asking ourselves a few questions about: What stood out for us; Were there any surprises or 'lightbulb' moments; How it shows us something about our identity in Christ; What we will do as a result of what we have learned.

In June, July and August we had monthly gatherings in the church, which were open to the whole congregation, and provided an opportunity to share some time together with praise, prayer, a short reflection, and of course, supper and chat! The August gathering was an end of summer celebration when we enjoyed a barbecue together.

In the Autumn term we studied The Bible Course – a video-based course developed by The Bible Society, which took us through the whole story of the Bible, helping us to see the big picture, and how to apply this in our everyday lives. This course was delivered in the church hall, which provided us with opportunities to meet with people we had not been in groups with before. It was great to welcome many people who had not been involved in Life Groups.

In all our groups we enjoyed fellowship together, sharing our thoughts and questions, and developing deeper relationships with each other.

### **Meeting House**

Meeting House is a Group for our Senior members which is also open to friends from neighbouring churches. The Group meets on the third Monday of each month at 2pm. Throughout the year the group invites a variety of speakers and guests. At each meeting the attendees have a cup of tea, biscuit and chat - a great way to catch up and socialise. Each meeting is opened with a Bible reading and prayer and also closed with the Lord's Prayer. On 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023 Reverend Stephen McCracken was the guest speaker. Group members enjoyed two fellowship events where catering was provided in the church halls i.e. 20<sup>th</sup> May 2023 afternoon tea and a festive Christmas meal was enjoyed by all in November 2023.

Meeting House is open to all and is a great way of getting to know others and remembering other's needs.

### **PW Women@First**

This is the women's ministry within our church meeting on the first Thursday of the month September – April.

This year in September the organisation launched Women @ First under the umbrella of PW. Our women chose the name at a Swim & Stroll event in June where we enjoyed a dip in the sea and a walk followed by supper at the beach.

We have had four meetings from September to December 2023

September – Butterfly craft based on our organisations theme of "Being Transformed"

October - we welcomed a speaker from Hope and Light who highlighted how they support victims of human trafficking.

November – Blessing Bag Ministry where gift bags were created to bless women and men of our church and the community going through difficult times/ bereavement, those young people leaving school to start college or work and those having their first baby.

December – Christmas Craft recycling of old books to create paper wreaths, angels and crackers and a festive supper.

Every year PW supports different projects at home and overseas as well as Deaconesses training in Belfast. Each year a coffee party is held and all the money raised is sent to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

The members demonstrate care and compassion to others by visiting members who are ill, give gifts at Christmas to those confined to their own home or in a nursing home. The members continue to support bereaved families by providing catering in the halls.

### **Youth Club**

Youth Club provide a safe and welcoming environment for kids from P4 to year 8 to come together where they can sit and chat, play games, make crafts etc. Our leaders are there to guide them when they ask for help or when they are really excited to tell us about their week, we are there to listen and celebrate with them.

In 2023, forty children were registered with an average of twenty-five attending each night Youth Club meets. The children enjoy craft, games and the leaders share the story of Jesus with them.

At Easter Kidz Farm visited Youth Club setting up in the hall where all the children got an opportunity to spend time with the different animals. This was a very enjoyable evening and the children also received Easter Eggs as a treat.

Embrace Social was another great event where the team provided the children with games, music and an epilogue while they enjoyed pizza, chicken, sausages and chips to finish off the term.

When Youth Club started up again in September the leaders organised games, craft and stories about Jesus. There is also a Tuck Shop for the children.

At Harvest time the children make up Harvest Gift Bags which are distributed to the elderly in the congregation.

In December the children enjoyed a Christmas Party with bouncy castle, games and party food. The children were also given a Selection Box to take home.

The leaders would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who help on a regular basis to make Youth Club a welcoming and safe environment for the children who looking forward to coming and meeting up with their friends. The leaders would also appreciate prayer support that this area of Youth Ministry would continue to grow as we connect with youth within our congregation and the community.

### **Youth Fellowship**

Youth Fellowship meets twice a month for gatherings in our own church building.

Additionally, there are extra occasional Sunday nights where we join with other churches or attend Presbytery wide events. The aim of YF is to provide a space for secondary school age young people to learn more about how to live out life as a Christian. Mainly focusing on New Testament teaching. As well as playing games and building relationships. The first part of 2023 was spent working through the book of 2nd Peter. After Easter we used the 'Hope Explored' course from Christianity Explored as the basis for our meetings. September to Christmas was spent looking at the Bible and having practical sessions on what it is, how to read it and why it's important. Attendance can fluctuate with weeks of only a handful of young people up to having nights of ten in the room.

Outings in 2023 included an adventure day in Downhill Forest with Causeway adventures in April and a day outing in Portrush with Boardwalk Collective and other activities in May. Also in April was a church men's event which young people came along to at Room 2 Race.

#### **Holiday Bible Club**

Holiday Bible Club this summer ran for a week in August with around sixty children in attendance. The theme for the week was BE BRAVE. Each day looked at a different character in the Bible and how we can be brave in our faith in God. Similar to 2022 there was a good mix of children who are familiar to or connected to the church and those who weren't. The week finished off with a special Holiday Bible Club service on the Sunday of that week which children and parents attended.

#### **MUSIC MINISTRY**

Praise in songs and hymns is a fundamental aspect of worship on Sundays it is led by various musicians and singers. In December 2023 a choir was formed to contribute to our Christmas celebrations by providing an evening carol service followed by supper.

#### **YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CO-ORDINATOR**

Our full-time Co-Ordinator has been involved in these various youth ministries of First Ballymoney but also in particular events in the wider church and community. He has been involved school ministry in five local schools taking assemblies or speaking in Christian Union. He has been an officer in local BB Company. Teaming up with other youth leaders they have to held a regular inter-church event called Young & Free in ten different local churches.

#### **VOLUNTEERS**

The Trustees wish to acknowledge their deep appreciation of those who give freely of their time by serving on committees and helping with organisations and other church activities.

#### **PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT**

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland meets the public benefit requirement by providing benefit to its members and the general public by making known the Christian Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ through the advancement of religion.

The direct benefits which flow from the purpose 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).

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 secular organizations, charities and individual members of the public.

The Kirk Session has had regard to the Charities Commission's Public Benefit requirement statutory guidance.

#### **AGM**

An AGM was held on the 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023

#### **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

The congregation's main source of income is members' contributions through Weekly Freewill Offering [WFO]. There were (191) contributors (183) contributing families during the 2023 year to WFO compared to (200) contributors and (191) contributing families in the previous year, 2022 donating a total amount of £100,374 for 2023 compared to £95,614 in the previous year, 2022.

Total Income of the congregation during the year 2023 was £182,403.00 compared to £187,031.00 in 2022

Total Expenditure for 2023 was £173,208 compared to £167,484 in 2022

#### **STATEMENT OF TRUSTEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the annual report and the financial statements of the congregation in accordance with applicable law and generally accepted accounting practice.

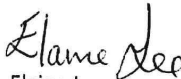
As the congregation total income does not exceed £250,000, the Trustees have elected under Section 64(3) of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 to prepare a receipts and payment account and a statement of assets and liabilities.

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 13 March 2024 and signed on its behalf by



Neil Robinson  
Dated 13/3/2024



Elaine Lee  
Dated 13/3/2024