

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

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

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC105386)

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

Ballyblack congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland
c/o 23 Grange Road, Millisle, Newtownards BT22 2JB

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC105386)

CHARITY TRUSTEES

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

David Blevings
Betty Glenn
Alex Warden

Robert Bole
David McCracken
Elizabeth Warden
Rev Andras Gilicze

PRINCIPAL OFFICE BEARERS

Minister
Clerk of Session
Treasurer

Rev Andras Gilicze
David McCracken
Robert Bole

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Neeson Chambers Limited
123/125 Main Street, Bangor BT20 4AE

BANKERS

Danske Bank
PO Box 183, Donegall Square West, Belfast BT1 6JS

SOLICITORS

Elizabeth A Warden Solicitor
The Stables, Seaview Farm
92 Bowtown Road, Newtownards, County Down, BT23 8SL

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 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 four times 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. Ballyblack congregation of the Presbyterian Church has been assigned to the Ards Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The membership of the Presbytery consists mainly of the active ministers of congregations assigned to it by the General Assembly, ministers who have retired from active duty and an elder appointed by the Kirk Session of the congregation.

The General Assembly

The General Assembly is the supreme court of the Church, representing in one body the whole Church and acting as its supreme legislative, administration and judicial authority, in dealing with all matters brought before it. The General Assembly is normally constituted during the first week in June for worship and to conduct its business. At the end of business

it is dissolved. The membership of the General Assembly consists mainly of the active ministers of each congregation, retired ministers and a representative elder appointed by the Kirk Session of each congregation.

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

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

Ballyblack 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 purpose is as follows:

The congregation of Ballyblack reaches as far back as 1813 and individuals and families from the surrounding area have been gathering for worship in the present building since 1872. Ballyblack Presbyterian Church is set on a hill in a rural area and is somewhat unique in that it is one of the few churches in the Ards Presbytery that is 'truly rural.'

The present situation:

The congregation of Ballyblack PC has, within the past 10 years, been able to enjoy updated, extended and refurbished hall accommodation fit for purpose for the 21st Century. These facilities are in regular use by the Church organisations and the wider community and the debt needed to provide these facilities has been repaid thanks to the generosity and support of the whole congregation.

A committed group of people within the congregation are involved in leading and supporting in various ways within a range of organisations and groups: Sunday School and Creche – Girls Brigade –Presbyterian Women –Community Men's Group –Indoor Bowling Club – Walking Group – Knit and Natter Group.

Like most congregations, the congregation has had its high points and low points in recent years but have held together and maintained a consistent witness through the challenging times as well as the good times. The leadership of the congregation is aware, of course, that 'maintenance mode' is not an option and there is a work within and without to be done.

A work within:

Sometimes busyness is interpreted as 'growth in the faith' which can mean that the 'building up' of the fellowship doesn't always have the focus it should have. This is something we have been working towards in recent times and with some further support/help from Congregational Life and Witness resources/courses and through related future ministry would wish to see developed further. We believe that a growing confidence in God's Word and in prayer amongst God's people will increase our effectiveness as individuals and as a congregation...by way of serving each other and serving the community of which we are a part.

A work without:

We have in mind here, firstly, that we need to re-establish contact with a number of individuals and families that claim a connection with us but have no active involvement in the congregation. Attempts have been made in the past to try and re-engage lapsed and fringe members by calling with newsletters, by visiting in times of illness and bereavement and by way of invitations to special Services. While this has not been fruitless we do need to be a bit more concerned, creative and active in our future efforts to engage with those who claim connections to the congregation.

Secondly, we are conscious that we have a number of girls within our GB who have no connection with us or any congregation. This is a potential area for outreach we could prayerfully engage in; perhaps in low-key ways to begin with...with a view to more focused engagement.

Past and present attempts at local and wider outreach include:

- The ongoing work of our youth organisations;
- Involvement with our local Integrated Primary School;
- The establishment of a Community Men's Group which meets monthly;
- The ongoing work of the Presbyterian Women's Group which provides a varied programme for the ladies in the congregation and their friends and supports prayerfully and financially the work of PCI worldwide;
- An annual Seedtime and Ploughmen's Service which is a Service of Thanksgiving for the entire farming community;
- Harvest Services;
- A Christmas Eve Service which attracts many people from the local community;
- Involvement with local congregations in the World Day of Prayer Service, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and the annual cross community Carol Service; and
- A recently established Walking Group; and
- Also recently established a Knit and Natter Group.

We were unable to operate normally for most of 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. 2022 and 2023 were more normal years but attendance has still not recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

The church leadership is aware that when we return to normal there is room to create further opportunities to establish work with parents and toddlers and other groups within the congregation.

The congregation of Ballyblack has always seen itself as part of the community and as bearing a Christian witness in the community. The open-door ministry of the church has resulted in the congregation often being looked to by the 'non-connected' in times of need. We have always seen this as an opportunity for outreach.

During our vacancy from Sept 2016 onwards we agree that the challenges before us were real and seen...but not at all overwhelming. The congregation is in good heart; we are a warm and welcoming people; we have lots to offer within the life of the congregation and

the wider community and we have a work to do within and without for the Glory of God and for the advancement of His Kingdom within our area. We were not granted Leave to Call a full-time Minister, but rather we were Linked with the congregation of Carrowdore and Ballyfrenis, whose Minister retired at the end of July 2019. We appointed the Rev Andras Gilicze as the shared minister for the two congregations and he was installed as such on 23 November 2020 at a socially distanced service due to the pandemic. With God's help and effective leadership, we can be in a good place in 3/5 years' time by building on our strengths and working through our weaknesses together. Therein we can continue to be a light on the hill from which we, as a Christian community, can reflect the love of Jesus and reach out to others.

ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

Normally 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 has a wide range of organisations including

- Sunday School (now known as Kidzone) and Creche
- Girls' Brigade
- Presbyterian Women
- Bowling Club
- Walking Group

Non-members of the congregation are very welcome to attend any of these and many, in fact, do so.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Worship and prayer

The congregation normally meets for worship each Sunday at 10.00am.

As well as our regular services during the year we sought to comfort those who had been bereaved during the year.

At 31 December 2023 there were 114 communicant members and 147 families connected with the congregation. The average weekly attendance at morning worship was 60.

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 and elders. Pastoral care is done by telephone when visiting is restricted.

Mission and outreach

The congregation's local mission and outreach is described above under the congregation's mission purpose.

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 the areas of worship, discipleship, global mission, outreach, leadership and pastoral care.

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

Presbytery

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

General Assembly

The minister and one of our elders are normally nominated to attend the meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland normally in Assembly Buildings, Belfast, in June.

Property

During the year we had significant work done on our Church entrance from the road to improve safety, as well as carrying out regular and scheduled maintenance to our properties to maintain their integrity and to comply with all local regulations.

Organisations

Sunday School and Creche meet every Sunday morning in the hall September to June. We have approximately 10 children aged 1 month to 16 years who attend regularly. Our children's ministry this year has been running under the name of Kidzone and our weekly lessons are interactive with the children learning their bible lessons through games and craft activities. Ballyblack walking group meet at 9.30 in the church car park and we walk to the end of the Cunningburn Road and back again.

We have about 10 members with an average of 6 walking each week.

Ballyblack Girls Brigade - 2023

We have had a great year in GB. Our numbers continue to increase each year, and we are so blessed to be able to share friendship and fellowship together. Our activities included Team Games, drill, baking buns and decorating chocolate apples, learning how to make leek and potato soup, making Remembrance Lanterns and bird feeders, plenty of singing, walking

around Ards, and for the first time in over 20 years, we went on a residential camp. We followed the Headquarters Scripture Course and had great fun learning Bible verses, and discussing interesting and challenging topics together. We presented two girls with their Sub Officer Awards, and sisters, Rebecca and Rachel McCormick became Officers this year. We had a visit from The Guide Dogs and The Ards Peninsula First Responders who taught our older girls CPR. We were delighted to give both these charities a donation from our GB. The Bowling Club meets in the Hall on Wednesday evenings from September to March. There were a total of 13 members in 2023, with an average attendance of around 10. This year we visited Ballygrainey for a competition, which unfortunately we lost.

Ballyblack Presbyterian Women 2023-2024 met on the 3rd Thursday of every month with an average attendance of 15 members. Our programme varied from speakers on subjects such as local and international charities to health and wellbeing issues. The Christmas outing was to The web Theatre to see the pantomime Aladin. We had a hospitality event in January which was well attended by 75 members of many other PW groups. A coffee morning is planned for Saturday 25th May as our final event of the year.

Volunteers

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

PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

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

The direct benefits which flow from the purposes of the Church include the gaining of an understanding in Christian beliefs as set out in the Bible and in the Church's subordinate standards (the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Shorter and Larger Catechisms) leading to spiritual and moral development and opportunities for response to Bible teaching. In turn, this framework leads to practical expressions of Christian beliefs and standards in the local community such as through the care of those in need (including the sick, disabled and bereaved).

Generally the above benefits are delivered locally by congregations and their members, or are facilitated through presbyteries or are organised and delivered centrally. Local delivery is facilitated by central resources in almost all cases. Public access is made known through the use of noticeboards, printed material, press advertisement, websites, and social media or in other ways.

The benefits are demonstrated through regular evaluation of the services and informal and ad-hoc feedback from members, their families, and members of the public.

The purpose does not lead to harm. The only private benefit flowing from our purpose is related to Ministers, Missionaries, Deaconesses, Irish Mission workers and Lay Agents who receive benefits as a result of their holding office or employment. However, this is incidental and necessary in order to further our charitable purpose. There are no other private benefits. The beneficiaries of this purpose are members, their families, other individuals that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is in direct and indirect contact with, the community in which pastoral services are provided and other communities throughout Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and worldwide which benefit from our engagement with and support for both Christian and other secular organisations, charities and individual members of the public.

The Kirk Session has had regard to the Charity Commissions Public benefit requirement statutory guidance.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The congregation's main source of income is members' contributions through the Weekly Freewill Offering and the Property & Development Fund. There were 151 contributors during the year [145 in previous year,2021] donating a total of £49,341 (£45,692in previous year,2021).

Total Income of the congregation during the year was £82,169, compared to £78,786 in the previous year. Total expenditure rose to £94,648 from £75,545.

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 congregations 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.

**BALLYBLACK CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND
TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (cont'd)**



Approved by the Kirk Session on 17 September 2024 and signed on its behalf by

Andras Gilicze

Rev Andras Gilicze

Date 17 SEPT 2024

David McCracken

David McCracken

Date 17 Sept 2024