

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



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

**Trustees Annual Report
for the year ended 31 December 2024**

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC105386)

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TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (cont'd)**



The Trustees present their Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024 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 5 Ballyblack Road Newtownards BT23 8SR

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 at 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,

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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 12/13 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

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 several 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 several 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.
- A joint service on Easter Sunday morning with Carrowdore & Ballyfrenis and Milisle Church of Ireland
- A very well-established Walking Group.
- A Souper seniors lunch club.

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.

Since the appointment of our minister Rev Andras Gilicze in November 2020 and 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 also continue to grow together with our neighbours in Carrowdore and Ballyfrenis since we became a linked congregation in 2020.

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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. We were delighted at the end of 2024 to elect 3 new elders to our church, and they will be ordained at a service early in 2025.

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
- Souper Seniors.

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.

On 31 December 2024 there were 117 communicant members, and 125 families connected with the congregation. The average weekly attendance at morning worship was 55

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

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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 carried out planned maintenance and repairs to our property. We did not undertake any major infrastructure projects this year. We have plans for next year to install new boiler in hall, replace hall front doors and replace rear window in church. We recognise that we have significant future costs due to the age of both our church and church halls but are confident that we have the funds to do this. We also recognise the previous and ongoing generosity of the contributions financially made by our congregation.

Organisations

Sunday School and Creche meet every Sunday morning in the hall September to June. We have approximately 12 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. We also held our usual joint Christmas party with GB catering for approx. 40 children and took part in the community afternoon tea and sale in the hall where we sold plants to raise funds for local charities.

The walking group meet every Monday in the church carpark at 9.30 and walk for about 1 hour 30 minutes taking the same route along local quiet country roads. We have about 10 members with an average of 6 walking each week.

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Ballyblack Girls Brigade - 2024

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. This year our programme included line dancing, life skills which included car maintenance, household budgeting, baking. We continued this year with our very successful residential, this year in Crawfordsburn Scout Centre. Our annual display was again a parents evening which attracted a very large audience with great parental involvement

The Bowling Club meets in the Hall on Wednesday evenings from September to March. There was a total of 13 members in 2024, with an average attendance of around 10.

Ballyblack Presbyterian Women 2023-2024 met on the 3rd Thursday of every month with an average attendance of 15 members. Our programme started in September with Praise and Pudding with the Peninsula Choir and guests In October Sid and Jean Garland talked about their life mission work in Africa. In November NDABC gave us advice on recycling. December was time for our annual Christmas dinner which this year was in the Stables Groomsport. The new year started in January with Quilts 4 care leavers showing us how they provide "hugs" for those leaving care. February continued with a trip to the Regent cinema and the film One life. March was our members evening where various group members shared their skills and gifts. Prior to our AGM we had a talk from Connect Counselling We had our annual PW church service led by Rev Lesley Ann Wilson. We plan a vintage tea party in June to celebrate 85 years of women's ministry in Ballyblack.

On the first Thursday of each month, we have a Souper Seniors group who meet in the church hall. Lunch is provided and the group enjoy the fellowship. There would be around 25 people attending this event.

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 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

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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 using 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 because of their holding office or employment. However, this is incidental and necessary 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 65 groups 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 £41,037 T/Y vs £40820 L/Y, Property fund £5260 T/Y vs £5830 L/Y and collections through various special services and events £9357 T/Y vs £8579 L/Y

Total Income of the congregation during the year was £ 94,250, compared to £90,490 in the previous year. Total expenditure as planned, due to less property refurbishment fell from £96,814 in the previous year to £79,656 this year.

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.

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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.

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Approved by the Kirk Session on ___19/6/25_____ and signed on its behalf by

Rev Andras Gilicze

David McCracken

Date 19/6/25

Date 19/6/25

Signed Ink Copy retained on paper file.