

**Shaftesbury Square Reformed Presbyterian Church**  
**106344**  
**Trustee Annual Report for Year Ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023**

Shaftesbury Square Reformed Presbyterian Church is situated at 72 Dublin Road, Belfast BT2 7HP. It is a congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland and shares the purpose of the denomination to support and advance the Christian Faith according to the Word of God and in accordance with the 'Book of Government and Order of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland'. Our Mission Statement is simple, "To share God's Word in a loving way with the people of Belfast".

### **Governance**

The congregation is governed by the Session which is made up of elders who have been elected by its members. The Charity Trustees are the members of Session and in 2023 these were:

Mr James David Laverty  
Dr Samuel Morrell Lyons  
Dr Hugh Thompson McCullough  
Rev William David John McKay  
Mr John Noel Simpson

Dr William Wallace resigned from the Session at the start of the year and hence is no longer a Charity Trustee.

In the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, each congregation is accountable to one of four Presbyteries and the Shaftesbury Square congregation is a member of the Eastern Presbytery. Each meeting of Presbytery is made up of the ministers within the bounds of the Presbytery along with one other elder appointed by each congregation.

Synod is the ultimate governing body of the denomination and consists of all ministers of the denomination along with one other elder appointed by each congregation in the denomination.

### **Activities**

During 2023 we were able to resume most of the congregation's normal activities as we put the coronavirus restrictions behind us. We provided weekly public worship services each Sunday both in the morning and in the evening. These meetings were open to the public and attracted visitors as well as regular attenders. We also continued with the on-line streaming of services, providing alternative means for people to engage in worship. These remain available on our YouTube channel for those who may wish to view them at a later date. Audio versions of the sermons are available on our SermonAudio channel.

The church also provided regular opportunities for Bible study and prayer which continued on-line. The Sacrament of the Lords Supper was observed on three occasions during the year and all those who are members of the congregation or who have made a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are admitted to the Lord's Supper.

The congregation holds fellowship meetings for various subsets of the congregation. The Women's Fellowship met bi-monthly and there were occasional, informal opportunities for the men to meet for fellowship. A meeting for students (Shaftesbury Fellowship) was held twice-monthly during term time. On Sundays there was time for coffee after the morning service for all those present and

also any passers-by who wished to come in and chat or just to see around our building which has listed status.

On Friday evenings, the congregation held English Classes, with a qualified teacher of English, for those living and working in the area whose first language was not English.

## **Achievements**

During the year our worship services, both in the church building and on-line, provided the opportunity for worship of a devotional nature and regular teaching on Biblical principles and their application to everyday life. There was further opportunity for learning from the Bible and engaging in prayer at the on-line prayer meetings which were held on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month and at the monthly on-line Bible studies. Our activities are also described on our church web site and this has proved particularly useful for those visiting from other places. We have had quite a few overseas visitors during the year.

Members of the congregation are encouraged to practise their faith by giving generously to charitable work outside of the congregation. We have a particular interest in overseas relief and, as has been our practice, our main effort in 2023 involved holding a special meeting to support TEAR Fund. We also support several other charities including the Bible Society and the worldwide Leprosy Mission. At a more local level we have a Benevolent Fund to help people taking part in church activities such as teenagers and young adults attending church camps.

The Shaftesbury Fellowship provided an evening meal and a setting for social interaction and informal teaching for young adults working and studying in the area, particularly those attending the local Queens University. Many of these also attended our worship services.

As well as helping those from the international community to improve their language skills, the English Classes provided them with an opportunity for social interaction. As the students come from various religious backgrounds, it has provided us with an opportunity to share our beliefs with them and to discuss comparative religious matters.

We supported the International Student Welcome event by the provision of a representative on the organising committee.

Our minister supports the more general advancement of the work of our denomination and others as he contributes as a professor to the training of students for the Christian Ministry at the Reformed Theological College.

Those unable to attend services through sickness or age are visited regularly and provided with sermon outlines and other church publications as well as having access to the ongoing on-line meetings.

## **Public Benefit**

The objectives of our denomination and our congregation are very much aligned with the Public Benefit statement we have given to the Charities Commission and the Session has had regard to the Charity Commission's public benefit requirement statutory guidance. In setting our objectives and planning our activities for the year the Session has given careful consideration to ensuring that the activities have helped to achieve the charity's purposes and to maximise the benefit to the beneficiaries.

## **Financial Review**

The congregation's main source of income is members' contributions through the weekly freewill offering and collections. In 2023 they donated a total of £73,241 (a 13% increase on 2022). The total income from all sources in 2023 was £113,059, a similar increase on the 2022 figure.

Total expenditure in 2023 was £82,335 compared with £ 80,304 in 2022.

Date: August 2024

Hugh McCullough (Clerk of Session)