

## **BELFAST FIRST CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE**

### **TRUSTEES' REPORT (FEBRUARY 2024)**

#### **TRUSTEE DETAILS**

Currently elected Trustees, as at 30.09.23:

Pastor Isabel Hamill	Ms Tracy Mather
Mrs Lynne Duncan	Mrs Christine Molloy
Mrs Lynda Heron	Mrs Lynn Myers

**APPOINTMENT of TRUSTEES** is by election to Belfast First Church of the Nazarene Church Board, by the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the church. Trustees are elected to serve for a period of one year, with each Trustee retiring and being eligible for re-election each year.

In the absence of a full-time Pastor, the part-time Interim Pastoral Support Worker, who is a salaried employee of the church, acts as chairperson of the Trustees but is not an elected Trustee.

***In fulfilling the public benefit requirement, the Trustees have had regard to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's statutory public benefit guidance.***

#### **OUR PURPOSE**

In accordance with the global mission of the Church of the Nazarene, our purpose continues to be:

- To make Christ-like disciples in the nations;
- To advance God's kingdom by the preservation and propagation of Christian holiness, as set out in the Scriptures; and
- To serve as an instrument for advancing the kingdom of God, through the preaching and teaching of the gospel.

#### **OUR BENEFICIARIES**

We seek to benefit the general public, through serving the community in which we are placed. All church services and activities are open to members and non-members alike and we continue to actively encourage all members of the community to avail of the activities and ministries of the church.

#### **RISK OF HARM AND PRIVATE BENEFIT**

We do not believe that there is any risk of harm, relevant to charity registration, arising from the activities of the church.

The only private benefit is to the part-time Interim Pastoral Support Worker and to the full-time manager of the Hope Shop, who both receive a salary; these salaries are incidental and necessary to carry out the functions and purposes of the church.

## **SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES**

Once again we come to the end of a blessed and busy year. We praise God for all that He is doing in us and through us, as we seek to serve our community and make Christ known.

### LEADERSHIP / MINISTRY:

The Church Board met on eight occasions during the past year and also met with the District Superintendent in relation to our on-going Pastoral vacancy.

We continue to pursue engagement of a full time Pastor for the church but are very thankful for the part-time ministry of our Interim Pastoral Support Worker, Pastor Isabel Hamill. The Church Board agreed for Isabel to reduce her part-time hours in November 2023, from sixteen hours per week, to ten hours per week, to allow her to devote more time to her second-year studies at Belfast Bible College. Isabel continues to lead the ministry programme of the church with inspiration and enthusiasm, preaching once per month, as well as conducting an active visitation programme to shut-in members, those who are ill and those in care homes.

Rev. Ivan Miles has continued to be an anchor in terms of regular preaching but is also an adviser and encourager to all of us, and our 'go to' expert in all issues related to church management. We are thankful to him for his faithfulness to our congregation, his inspiration and wisdom, as well as his ministry in conducting membership classes, baptisms and funerals.

### CHURCH MEMBERSHIP:

We have continued to see new people coming along to the church and our membership has grown; the number of church members reported last year was 43 and we are delighted that four people will come into full church membership before the District Assembly, making our total this year 47. We are blessed to enjoy the fellowship of others who are not full church members; our average attendance at Sunday services this year, including children, is 63 - an increase of 12 in comparison with average attendance last year.

### SERVICES:

We continue to meet every Sunday for family worship and the sharing of God's Word, at 11.30am. We have not yet recommenced evening services, following the pandemic and during this period of pastoral vacancy; the Church Board keeps this matter under regular review.

We also continue to meet every Wednesday evening at 7.45pm for communal prayer and devotions, led each week by one of a small team of volunteers.

### SPECIALS:

In addition to our regular programme, we have enjoyed a wide range of special events and services in the past year:

- Easter celebrations once again included Holy Week daily devotions (shared on social media by volunteers each morning), a Good Friday Service and an Easter breakfast with Easter Egg Hunt for the children, before the church service on Easter Sunday.
- Special services, with participation from the children, for Mother's Day and Father's Day;
- Service of Thanksgiving for the work of the Hope Shop in May, followed by a lunch in the church hall;
- Children's Prize-Giving service in June, to celebrate the ministry of Kingdom Kids;
- Community Family Fun Day and barbecue in the church grounds in June – the first of these since before the pandemic. This event was very well supported by the local community, with more than 250 attending;
- Subsidised bus run to Newcastle in July, with 40 people from the church and community attending;
- In October 2023, we were privileged to host a special service of thanksgiving in celebration of the life and work of Rev. Irene Wallace - a much-loved and revered Church Elder, missionary, leader and dear friend to so many. Many visitors came from across the British Isles North District to be involved in the service and to pay tribute to Rev. Irene;
- December 2023 saw the return of the Belfast First Church Christmas Dinner, when almost 60 members and friends enjoyed delicious food, fun and fellowship in the church hall, leading us into the holiday season;
- Community carol singing, a children's Christmas party, nativity play, Christingle service, Church musical programme, coffee and refreshments before Sunday services, Christmas post-box - all these came together to make this the most special Christmas season since before the pandemic!

### MINISTRIES:

- **HOPE SHOP:** The Hope Charity Shop has been ministering in the local North Belfast community since May 2010; it is with God's continual guidance and blessing over the years that this amazing ministry of our church continues to thrive. We continue to employ Mrs Shelly Rogers as our full-time shop manager and are so thankful to her for all her hard work and efforts. We are also indebted

to every one of the 13 volunteers who staff the shop and mean it can open five days per week, serving the local community.

The Hope Shop is so much more than just a charity shop. Many folks from the local community and beyond come in to ask for prayer or simply appreciate a listening ear, as they share their stories with those who are working. Over this past year, we have also received many prayer requests left in the shop's prayer box - these dear people are then prayed for at our mid-week church prayer meetings. Holy week devotional messages were also shared on the shop's Facebook page. We were delighted to see many of the shop's volunteers and their family members at the Thanksgiving Service last June. God is giving us many opportunities to share His Good News and show His love, not only to those who work in the shop but also to all who come through its doors.

The shop was again able to make significant financial donations to several other registered charities this year, including Hope House, Smile Train, Sight Savers, Air Ambulance, AA Veterans Support, St John Ambulance, Positive Futures, Aspen Day Centre, Springboard, PIPS, Lighthouse Counselling Service, Abbeylands Nursing Home (Rev Fred & Mrs Maureen Cowan's nursing home). The shop also raised £300 for Cash for Kids in November and presented Child Evangelism Fellowship with a cheque for £500 in July.

- **MINISTRY TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH:**

- Kingdom Kids is our Sunday School programme for primary age children which runs on Sunday mornings during the service, with up to 16 children attending each week. We are grateful to our Sunday School Superintendent, Mrs Susan Harrison, and her team of faithful volunteers, for all their hard work throughout the year;
- We partner with Child Evangelism Fellowship in running a Monday night Good News Club for primary age children and a fortnightly Thursday night Junior Youth Challenge for young teens. The Good News Club has an average of 18 children attending – mainly different children from those who attend Sunday Kingdom Kids. We are grateful to Julie Fenton (CEF) for facilitating these clubs and also for leading a five day club and a five day non-residential camp for children, held in our church, in July 2023. Overall, around 70 children were involved in these two summer programmes. We are truly blessed to be a part of these outreach initiatives for children in our local area.

- **LADIES FELLOWSHIP:** The Ladies Fellowship, led by Pastor Isabel Hamill, has continued to meet on the first Thursday of every month at 7.30pm, from October to May. At present, there are approximately 25 ladies attending, many

of whom do not regularly attend other services. A varied programme is offered throughout the year, to ensure there is something for everyone – with plenty of laughs along the way!

- **NAZARENE MISSIONS INTERNATIONAL:** As a church, we lift regular offerings to support Nazarene missions work globally - Alabaster Offering, World Evangelism Fund (through Easter and Harvest offering) and Compassionate Ministries, answering the call for emergency relief in disaster areas. We also collected clothing and toiletries in April and various items for the Christmas shoebox appeal in October, to support the work of Project Romania.

## **BUILDING / PREMISES**

Considerable upkeep / maintenance work has been undertaken to the church building in the past year, including:

- Refurbishment / redecoration of the Hamill Room, in memory of Pastor David. This room is used regularly for prayer, bible study and many other aspects of the church programme;
- Refurbishment / redecoration of the corner Sunday School room (adjoining the Joy Room), to allow the children to be separated into two age-groups in Kingdom Kids each Sunday;
- Repair of the lights in the sanctuary toilets, which had been a recurring long-term problem;
- Commissioning of an Emergency Lighting System Inspection and an Electrical Installation Condition Inspection, by Little Electrical (Commercial Electricians) between October and December 2023. We are now waiting for Little Electrical to undertake the recommended remedial work, as per the above reports;
- Repair to outside guttering at the back of the building. Guttering at the car-park side of the hall also needs replacing and we are currently seeking quotes for this work;
- Regular clearance of the car-park and grounds, to keep them free from weeds and moss;
- Repair of broken letters above main entrance to the church on two occasions, following storm damage. The fixtures on the lettering are aged – we intend to look into replacement of all the lettering in the coming year;
- Service of both gas boilers, which identified that the hall boiler and flue needed to be replaced. This work was completed in January;
- The boiler service also identified that the sanctuary boiler was leaking – this boiler was new in 2021 and therefore has now been repaired under warranty;
- While the above work was being completed on both boilers, we paid an additional cost to have the two boilers (hall and sanctuary) linked to one

another, meaning that if one boiler fails for any reason, the other boiler will provide heat to both areas;

- Repair of hall radiators, after several of these were found to be leaking in December;
- Annual inspection and service of fire extinguishers / fire safety equipment in church hall;
- We are currently making arrangements for a repair to the hall roof, where water has recently been noted to be coming in around one of the skylights.

Priorities in the coming year, in terms of maintenance work, include:

- Hall roof repair, required immediately, as above;
- Completion of recommended work to the emergency lighting system and electrical installations, as outlined above;
- Servicing of fire safety system in sanctuary and updating of installation of new system in church hall;
- Exploring new outdoor signage for the entrance of the church (gate area), to raise the profile of the church in the community.

We continue to seek to serve the local community by allowing our hall and facilities to be used regularly by two community groups - Slimming World (Tuesday evenings and Saturday mornings) and the Ulster Military Historical Society – a group of retired gentlemen who meet in our premises on the first Saturday afternoon of each month. Sadly, the We Slim Together group which met in the church each Monday for several years, had to close at the end of October 2023, due to low numbers. The group leader, Catherine Kidd, expressed her sincere thanks to the church for its support over the years and we wish her well for the future.

As well as the two groups which continue to use the building regularly, we have been happy to continue to allow the hall to be used by families in the community, for children's birthday parties, when this is requested (providing the hall is available).

## **FINANCES**

Details of all income and expenditure can be found in the financial report. The accounts have been independently examined by a suitably qualified Independent Examiner and his report is attached.

The church finances remain healthy and we thank the Lord for how He continues to meet our needs. Heartfelt thanks to every person who gives faithfully and sacrificially to the ministry of the church, through regular offerings, donations and special gifts. The church claims tax back from HMRC through Gift Aid and the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme (GASDS) where possible.

Tithes and offerings this past year increased by almost £1400, to just under £34,600. We remain debt-free, since the repayment of our building loan in December 2021, and

this past year, we once again paid our apportionment in full to British Isles North District (for the year ended September 2023).

### **LOOKING FORWARD**

Looking to the future, we pray for God's continued blessing, strength, wisdom and guidance, as we labour for Him and seek to serve the community around us.

This report has been approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf:

Respectfully Submitted,

Ms Tracy Mather

(Trustee and Church Treasurer)

July 2024.