

Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church, Newtownabbey

(Trinity Congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland)

Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023

Charity Commission for Northern Ireland Number : NIC 106535

The Trustees present the annual report and financial statements for Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church, Newtownabbey for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Reference and Administrative Information

Charity Name: Trinity Congregation of The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (otherwise referred to as "Trinity RP Church, Newtownabbey")

Year of constitution : 1896 (relocated to current site in 1983)

Charity Registration Number: NIC 106535

Contact Address: 560 Doagh Road, Mossley, Newtownabbey BT36 5BU

Correspondence Address: 560 Doagh Road, Mossley, Newtownabbey BT36 5BU

Charity Trustees

Rev. Professor W J Peel (resigned 23rd September 2023)

J A Donnelly

R S Drennan

G A Gillespie

W O Graham

J K McKelvey

K J Nelson

R S Wilson

Principal Office-bearers :

Minister: Rev. Prof. W J Peel (resigned 23rd September 2023)

Clerk of Session: K J Nelson

Treasurer: S Gamble

Independent Examiner : JAS Campbell & Company, 49 Managher Rd, Aghadowey, Coleraine BT51 4DE

Bankers : Danske Bank, 18 The Square, Ballyclare BT39 9BB

Structure, Governance and Management

The Session

The government of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland is vested in the following courts in ascending order of precedence ; Session , Presbytery and Synod.

The charity trustees of the congregation are the members of its Session. Under the congregation's governing document, The Code (the book of government and order of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland) the Session seeks to watch over and promote the spiritual interests 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 congregation to Christian witness and service in the local community.

The Session has delegated to its Board of Deacons the temporal affairs of the congregation including administering all funds and property belonging to the congregation. Members of the Session are ex-officio members of the Board of Deacons.

The Session consists of the ordained minister and the ruling elders of the congregation. The minister of the congregation presides in the Session, and is called the Moderator. In the absence of the Moderator, any other minister of the Church, if deputed by him may preside.

Stated meetings of Session are publicly announced to the congregation and are constituted as a Court of the Church.

The Moderator is responsible to declare the Court constituted, dissolved or adjourned.

The Moderator and two other members of Session constitute a quorum.

All members are entitled to propose, speak and exercise equal votes at meetings, except that the Moderator has the casting vote. 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 Session.

Stated meetings of the Session are usually held at least 9 times in each year.

All stated meetings of Session are minuted, with minutes approved and signed by the Moderator and Clerk of Session at succeeding meetings and duly recorded in the Session Minute Book.

Session minute books are inspected annually by the Presbytery.

Trustees do not receive remuneration, reward or other private benefit for carrying out their Trustee responsibility.

The Session ensures that there is an Annual General Meeting (AGM) which is usually held in January/February, announced in advance and open to all members and adherents.

Activity reports and audited financial reports from the Session, Deacons and other church organisations are published in advance of the AGM to all members. This facilitates discussion at the AGM where the reports and accounts are received and approved.

The Session Report and audited accounts are then submitted to the Presbytery where they are reviewed.

The Presbytery then publishes an annual report with information and audited accounts from all congregations within its bounds.

Presbytery

Under the Code of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of 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 Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Trinity congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church has been assigned to the Eastern Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. The members of the Presbytery consists mainly of the active ministers of congregations assigned to it by the Presbytery, ministers who have retired from active duty, ministers without charge, ordained missionaries whose credentials are with the Presbytery and an elder appointed by the Session of each congregation.

The Synod

The Synod 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 Synod is normally constituted during the second week in June for worship and to conduct its business. At the end of business it is dissolved. The membership of the Synod consists mainly of the active ministers of each congregation and a representative elder appointed by the Session of each congregation.

Description and Purpose

The charitable purpose of the congregation is the advancement of religion, specifically the Biblical Christian faith.

Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church, Newtownabbey is a congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, as a Reformed Church within the wider body of Christ is grounded in the Scriptures, and exists to worship, 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 the world. As a congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, we believe that the Bible is the supreme authority over all we do.

The regular holding of public worship is the congregation's principal activity.

We also view our fellowship as a missional community, whose aim is to serve and reach those who have yet to come to faith and to be part of God's ongoing work of renewing and recreating His world.

Objectives & Activities

The congregation usually meets for worship twice every Sabbath (Sunday) and everyone is welcome, whether members of the congregation or not.

Public worship is advertised via the Presbytery and Synodical directories and publications; congregational signage, website, social media and distribution of literature within the local community. On various occasions public worship and other church meetings are advertised in local and regional newspapers.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is usually observed on 5 or 6 occasions during the year.

In addition to meeting together for worship, fellowship and service, members are encouraged to actively reach out in friendship to those who are not yet believers and to engage in various approaches to spiritually and practically benefit the local community.

The congregation usually holds regular bible study, prayer and fellowship meetings and has a wide range of organisations which are available to the congregation and local community including:

- Sabbath (Sunday) School
- Covenanter Youth (Youth Fellowship)
- Tots Group
- Badminton Group
- Seniors Fellowship
- Men's Fellowship events
- Women's' Fellowship events

Achievements

'Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God.' (Hebrews 13:7)

'I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' (Matthew 16:18)

' For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD.' (Jeremiah 29:11)

These texts were preached on three significant occasions in the life of our congregation in 2023 :

- The morning service on 5th March when the passing of Professor Edward Donnelly on 4th March was publically announced.
- The guest service to mark the 40th anniversary of the opening of the Trinity building in Newtownabbey on 17th September.
- Professor Peel's "farewell sermon" to the congregation on 24th September after he accepted a call to the Galway congregation.

We are very thankful that for most of 40 years in Newtownabbey, Trinity has been greatly blessed by two faithful Pastors.

Within seven months, the Lord, in His all wise purposes, took both those men from us - one to glory, his earthly work finished, and one to a new field of service in the Kingdom.

Ted Donnelly and Warren Peel obeyed Ephesians 4:11-12 by equipping the saints in Trinity for ministry.

The members of Session are also deeply appreciative to Professor Peel for his faithful ministry in Trinity over eleven years from 2012 to 2023.

We are very thankful that Professor Robert McCollum agreed to serve as our Interim Moderator.

The pulpit ministry of Professor Peel and other men greatly encouraged and challenged us from God's Word.

Rev Yusuke Hirata from the Japanese RP church, along with his wife Honami and their sons, continued to worship and serve in the congregation up until they returned to Japan in October.

Those who have struggled with illness and bodily weakness as well as those who have experienced painful bereavements continued to be upheld in prayer.

Throughout the year worship services continued to be live-streamed through the Trinity YouTube channel. This continued to be a blessing to the housebound within the congregation as well as others who viewed locally, nationally and internationally.

The dedicated work of the Ministry Team in a variety of ways was a tremendous asset to congregational life - we are indebted to everyone involved.

Five communion sessions were held during the year with an average attendance of 80 communicants.

Average morning and evening attendances at public worship were 115 and 87 respectively.

The Sabbath School had an average attendance of 49 during the year.

An average of 50 young people regularly attended the CY groups on Friday evenings.

Home Fellowship Groups were held throughout the year - with an average attendance of around 40 – with all groups using the Immerse Messiah programme from September.

Trinity hosted the meetings of Synod during June and many from the congregation were involved in a variety of duties during the three days and the run up to them.

Several United mid-week Missionary meetings were held throughout the year and there was a 'Half Night of Prayer' in September.

The church programme included Home Psalm Singing. Sabbath evening prayer meetings were held twice per month.

Several church lunches and fellowship events were enjoyed by the congregation and visitors.

Specially designed invitations were issued inviting local residents to a guest service and community lunch to mark the 40th anniversary of the opening of the Trinity building in Newtownabbey on 17th September.

The Conference Committee organised a very enjoyable and edifying congregational weekend conference in October.

As well as monthly guest services during Professor Peel's ministry until September, outreach was undertaken by the WF including a well attended 'Trash from Treasure' event.

An initial 'Community Hub' outreach was run for several weeks over April and May, with an encouraging response.

During the year the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service used the church halls as a venue for blood donations by the local community.

Dr William Roulston delivered a series of lectures on the 'History of the Covenanters' in November.

A Holiday Bible Club (HBC) was held with an encouraging attendance of local children.

As well as providing an outreach opportunity to the local community, the HBC was well supported by the congregation, helping to develop gifts and a spirit of unity as all ages working effectively together.

Badminton and Trinity Tots continue to provide valuable opportunities for fellowship and outreach.

During December invitations to the congregation and its various programmes were circulated to the local community.

The Court of Session was constituted 14 times and Session meetings commenced with prayer times for the congregation and various pastoral needs.

A Session Conference was held in May to discuss, plan, and pray for the congregation and its pastoral needs.

Two joint meetings were held with the Board of Deacons to help co-ordinate church planning and discuss various matters impacting the congregation and its facilities.

The Session is deeply appreciative for and commends everyone who served diligently and voluntarily in many areas of work and witness during 2023, including the Sabbath School, CY groups, WF, Trinity Tots, Ministry Team, Conference Committee and Board of Deacons.

Presbytery

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

Synod

The minister and one of the elders were nominated to attend the meeting of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

Property

Under the oversight of the Deacons, and with the support of the congregation, the congregation's buildings are maintained and cleaned throughout the year with both planned and remedial work undertaken as necessary.

The Deacons ensure there are appropriate insurances in place for the buildings and all relevant legislative and statutory requirements are complied with.

Public Benefit Statement

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of 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, specifically the Biblical Christian faith.

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) and the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony 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 and bereaved.

Generally the above benefits are delivered locally by congregations and their members, or are facilitated through Presbytery or by the Synod through Synodical committees and funds.

Public access is made known through the use of church noticeboards, printed material, press advertisements, website, and social media or in other ways, particularly 'word of mouth'.

The benefits are demonstrated on an ongoing basis through responses to the services during pastoral work and informal 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, Mission workers and others who may 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 Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland is in direct and indirect contact with. This includes the community in which pastoral services are provided and other communities throughout Northern Ireland, and worldwide which benefit from our engagement with and support for both Christian and other organisations, charities and individuals in need.

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

Financial Review

Session records its thanks to the members of the Board of Deacons and in particular the congregational treasurer for their diligence in dealing with the financial affairs of the congregation.

The congregation's main source of income is members' contributions through the Weekly Freewill Offerings and other collections.

The total income for 2023 amounted to £194,012, a reduction of £3,360 over 2022. Expenditure totalled £212,496.

During 2023, £39,951 was provided for Synodical work, missions and other Christian activity.

During 2023 the congregation's giving to Christian work worldwide (inclusive of the above figure of £39,951) amounted to £73,420.

Reserves Policy

The Trustees' policy is to retain a level of free reserves or general reserves which matches its needs at the current time and in the foreseeable future. Free reserves are those unrestricted reserves not invested in fixed assets, which are available for general use.

The main reason for holding reserves is to ensure that the charity has enough resources to fund its programmes and to hold sufficient resources to meet its commitments. The Trustees believe that our reserves policy is both responsible and prudent, but have not specified a particular level of reserves to be held.

At 31 December 2023 the charity held unrestricted funds of £443,879 in terms of cash and deposit accounts representing almost 25 months' expenditure which is in line with what is regarded as an appropriate level, bearing in mind there is a future need for expenditure on refurbishment of the congregation's buildings.

No endowment funds are held by the charity.

Funds held as custodian trustee on behalf of others

There are no funds held as custodian trustee on behalf of others.

Statement of Trustees' 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'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.

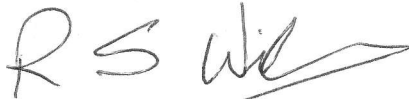
The Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 requires charity trustees to ensure that accounting records are kept which are sufficient to show and explain all the charity's transactions, which disclose with reasonable accuracy the financial position of the charity and enable them to prepare statement of accounts which complies with regulation under the Act. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- Make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- State whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operational existence.

Approved by the Session at a meeting on 15th October 2024 and signed on its behalf by :

S Wilson



K J Nelson – Clerk of Session

15th October 2024