



**ST. GREGORIOS INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (IOCNI) - BELFAST**

(EST: 2004)

(Diocese of UK-Europe-Africa of the Malankara (Indian) Orthodox Church)

Charity Registration No:106964

# Annual Report

## St. Gregorios Indian Orthodox Church, Belfast

2023-2024  
2023-2024

St. Gregorios Indian Orthodox Church,  
Belfast Bible College, Glenburn Road, Belfast BT17 9JP  
[www.iocni.org.uk](http://www.iocni.org.uk)



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### Trustees Report:

With great honour, I present this church report from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 on behalf of the Board of Trustees.

### Governance and Structure:

The St. Gregorios Indian Orthodox Church, Belfast, is a parish affiliated to and constituted by the Malankara Orthodox Church, also known as the Indian Orthodox Church. It was founded in India by St. Thomas, one of the Twelve apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ are administered by His Holiness Basielios Marthoma Mathews III, Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan, successor to the Apostolic Throne of St. Thomas.

St. Gregorios Indian Orthodox Church, Belfast, is under the direct ecclesiastical jurisdiction of His Grace Abraham Mar Stephanos, Metropolitan of the Diocese of UK- Europe- Africa, subject to the authority of the Holy Episcopal Synod of the Malankara Orthodox Church. Rev. Fr. Jobson Abraham, our present vicar who led the parish during the reporting year. Dn. Calvin Poovathoor is actively assisting our Vicar in all church matters. Our Church is a registered Charity under the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. The church generates its funds through members monthly subscriptions, donations from members, yearly charity box collections within the church community and other events organised by the church. The church donates money for people in need with medical conditions, the homeless and for educational purposes, and donations to various charity organisations in Northern Ireland.

### Objectives:

To maintain the faith and traditions of Malankara (Indian) Orthodox Church and to perform all religious rights and sacraments for all in Northern Ireland by the ancient Malankara (Indian) Orthodox traditions as followed by the Indian Orthodox Church in India.

The Church conducts Eucharist (Qurbana), sacraments, and other services according to the faith, traditions, customs, and rites of the Malankara (Indian) Orthodox Church. It also organises and conducts Sunday school, prayer meetings, and different activities for community development.

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### 1. General Body and Managing Committee/Board of Trustees Meetings, Office Bearers for the Year 2023-24.

The general body held a meeting on 10/6/23 and elected the present committee for another year, 2023-24, by adding a few committee members.

Secretary	Mr. Anil Thomas
Treasurer	Mr. Varghese Philip
Committee Members	Mr. Sanu John
	Mr. Shoby Saimon
	Mr. George Thomas
	Mr. Abraham Varkey
	Ms. Jinsu Mary Jacob
	Mr. Raju Issac (ex-officio)
	Mr. Bejoy Daniel (ex-officio)
	Mr. Aby Thomas
	Mr. Lijo Chacko
	Mr. Reny Mathew
	Mrs. Shenin Ninan
Internal Auditor	Mr. Mathew Koshy

The general body also elected other representatives:

Dr. Cucki Thomas (Youth representative)

Mr. George Thomas (Sunday School Headmaster)

Mrs. Sini Kuriakose (Martha Mariyam Samajam Secretary)

Mrs. Tensy John (Prayer Meeting Secretary)

The vicar Fr. Jobson Abraham is the chair of the trustee Board.



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The General Body, which met on 10/6/23, approved the annual report, annual Account Statement, and balance sheet for the years 2022-2023.

The Managing Committee (Board of Trustees) met online or in person several times during the year to plan and coordinate the parish's day-to-day church administration. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each committee member for their continued cooperation, dedication, and hard work.

### **2. Activities**

#### ***a) Worship and Pastoral Care***

Holy Qurbana is held twice every month during 2023-24. Holy Qurbana (Service) is celebrated on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of each month, commencing with morning prayer at 9 am and Holy Qurbana after that. Holy services are conducted by Vicar Rev. Fr. Jobson Abraham. Our Vicar conducts special prayers after Holy Qurbana and greets them with greeting cards on special occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries.

#### ***b) Holy Week Services 2023 & 2024***

Last year's Holy Week services were held from 1 April to 8 April 2023. Palm Sunday was held on 1 April at St. Peter's Church Hall, Antrim Road, Belfast. The remainder of the services were held in Belfast Bible College Dunmurry.

Holy Week services were held this year between March 24 and March 30, 2024. Our vicar, Fr. Jobson Abraham, led the services. Thanks to all families for their donations and sponsorship of refreshments/food.

#### ***c) Onam Celebration - Harvest Festival***

Onam is an Indian Annual Harvest Festival celebrated predominantly in the southern state of Kerala. Onam was celebrated at our church on 17/9/23, with an Onam Sadhya (meal) arranged for all members and entertainment. A number of families also won raffle prizes. Church members brought in home-grown products, and an auction of these products was held during the celebrations.



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### **d) Feast of our Patron Saint Gregorios**

By God's grace, we celebrated the 121st Memorial Day of St Gregorios of Parumala on November 5, 2023.

We conducted the Rasa and Nercha serving which was followed by the feast after the Holy Qurbana. Thanks to choir group led by Shibu and team from Dublin.

### **e) Christmas**

Christmas carol service was conducted on Dec 2nd, 9<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16th December again this year in a traditional manner, visiting the houses of our parish members. Over 4 days, we visited multiple homes, including most of our church members, spreading the warm festive greetings. Our Santa was very glad to present gifts and greeting cards to every household and pose with families for family photos. We raised £2271.00. We sincerely thank everyone for actively participating in the Christmas carol service, especially to all the youth who took the time to make it a tremendous success. We appreciate the effort taken by the youth coordinators in coordinating the service and organising the youth. Christmas service was conducted at St. Joseph Parish Hall in Antrim. Thanks to all families who contributed towards the Christmas service. We have collected £190 for the homeless through charity box collection during Christmas service.

### **3. Food Collection for Homeless**

We have arranged a charity box collection for the homeless in NI during Christmas. (Appeal titled "Feed our Homeless") on behalf of Welcome Organization. We have handed over £250 to Welcome Organization in Belfast. We extend thanks to all church members for their support.

### **4. Donations & Refreshments**

Our Sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed during the Perunnal, Christmas carol, auction and birthdays/anniversary collections. We are grateful to all of you for your continued contributions through monthly subscriptions and offerings. Several families have contributed towards refreshments/meals after the holy service and other events. God bless them all.



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### 5. Gift Aid.

We are preparing for Gift aid claim for 4 years. (2020-24). We appreciate all the effort Mr. Varghese Philip made in preparing the accounts for submission to HMRC. We sincerely thank all members who have filled the gift aid declaration form when requested.

### 6. Charity Box

We have distributed charity coin boxes. My sincere thanks to those who have contributed to our charity causes. A special mention to Dr. Cucki Thomas for her highest contribution.

### 7. Spiritual Organizations

#### a) *Sunday School/OVBS*

Sunday School classes were held online most weekends. Conducted OVBS (Orthodox Vacation Bible School) in October and closing ceremony on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Six Sunday school students attended the central 10<sup>th</sup> std exam, and all of them passed. One student sat the 12<sup>th</sup> central exam and passed. A new curriculum started for Sunday school students this year and there is currently a total of eight Sunday school divisions and more than 50 students. I want to thank Mr. George Thomas (Headmaster), vicar Fr. Jobson Abraham and all the Sunday School teachers for their continued efforts in making Sunday school a big success.

#### b) *Martha Mariyam Samajam.*

Martha Mariyam Samajam organised all church events. Thanks to Martha Mariyam, coordinator Mrs. Sini Kuriakose, and her team members for their efforts and involvement.

#### c) *Youth Movement*

The Youth Movement actively supports all church activities. I appreciate all the youth coordinators' efforts in organising the youth new to Northern Ireland.



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### **d) Prayers Meetings**

Area-wise prayer meetings were started on Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> February 2024. Antrim, Dundonald, Lisburn, Craigavon, Enniskillen and Belfast areas. Thanks to our vicar, Fr. Jobson Abraham, for his efforts.

### **8. Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults – NSPCC**

The Safeguarding Children and Adults course was held on Saturday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. All Sunday school teachers, Church priests, and office bearers (those directly involved with children) attended the course.

### **9. Pastoral visit of bishop**

H.G Abraham Mar Stephanos metropolitan of UK, Europe and Africa of the Malankara Orthodox Church made a pastoral visit to Belfast church on Sunday, July 9<sup>th</sup>. H.G. Abraham Mar Stephanos celebrated Holy Qurbana.

### **10. Appointments/Recognition from Church**

Sanu John was elected as Diocesan representative on 8<sup>th</sup> April. Dr. Cucki Thomas was elected as OCYM Ireland region coordinator.

Fr. George T was relieved from the responsibilities as the Vicar of St. Gregorios IOC, Belfast w.e.f. 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023, and Fr. Jobson Abraham appointed the new vicar of St. Gregorios, IOC Belfast w.e.f. 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023 until further orders by Kalpana ref E-175/AMS/2023 dated 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023.

### **11. New Members.**

We welcome all the new members who joined our church last year.

### **12. Newborn & Baptism (Christening)**

We welcome all little ones to our church. The baptism of Adam Jomon S/o Jomon Chacko and Manju Mathew was held on 15/10/23.

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### 13. Our Charity

Several charity donations were made over the last year. Our charity donations are listed below:

Cash donations to the homeless (Welcome Organisation) and food donations to the homeless are collected by the church for Welcome Organisation, Royal National Institute of Blinds, air ambulance services NI, NI Hospice (Children), Marie Curie Hospice, and British Red Cross. **Total cash donations made £1200.**

### 14. Communication

We are using e-mail and WhatsApp to communicate church news to our members. Our Facebook page also covers most events through wonderful photographs. Our official website is: [www.iocni.org.uk](http://www.iocni.org.uk)

### 15. Farewell

We were honoured to arrange a Farewell meeting with Fr. T George on 10 June 2023. We had the opportunity to express our appreciation and love for all that he has done for our church. Raju and their family secretaries, Bejoy Daniel and Sinju Raju, have relocated to Australia to seek better opportunities. Best wishes to all of them.

### 16. Financial Activities:

During 2023- 2024, the total income was £44,319.57, and the total expenditure was £30,448.14. With the retained surplus of £58,383.64 from the previous year, the current surplus is £72,255.07.

### 17. Future Developments.

With the enormous support from our members and well-wishers, we would like to extend our activities. We are planning to find a permanent place for worship and activities.



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### 17. Conclusion and Word of Thanks

Thanks to Diocesan Metropolitan H.G. Abraham Mar Stephanos, Vicar Rev. Fr. Jobson Abraham, Treasurer Mr. Varghese Philip, all managing committee members, and all parish members for continued support during my tenure. I would also like to extend a thank you to Bible College officials for their support.

#### **Approval**

This report is presented to the Church General Body and approved on 16/06/2024

For Board of Trustees.

Anil Thomas  
Secretary