

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

**Trustees Annual Report  
for the year ended 31 December 2023**

**Registered Charity in Northern Ireland NIC 107685**

## **ALEXANDRA CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND**

### **TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT**

The Trustees present their Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 including a Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at that date.

### **REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS**

Alexandra Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

80 York Road,  
Belfast  
BT15 3HF

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland NIC 107685

### **CHARITY TRUSTEES**

The Charity Trustees who served during the year or who were trustees at the date of this report were:

Mr Stephen Barr  
Miss Elizabeth Mabel Beggs  
Rev. Ian Cahoon  
Mr John Craig  
Mr Wesley William Lewis  
Mr Samuel David McConkey  
Mr Hugh William Muise  
Mr Mervyn Henry McCormick  
Mr Lawrence Wallace  
Mr Trevor Wilson

### **PRINCIPAL OFFICE BEARERS**

Minister	Rev. Ian Cahoon
Clerk of Session	Mr Mervyn Henry McCormick
Treasurer	Mr Samuel David McConkey

### **INDEPENDENT EXAMINER**

Mr. Roy Eakin  
18 Farm Lodge Road  
Greenisland  
BT38 8XH

## **BANKERS**

Ulster Bank Ltd,  
202-206 York Street,  
Belfast  
BT15 1HY

Progressive Building Society,  
33-37 Wellington Place,  
Belfast  
BT1 6HH

## **SOLICITORS**

C & J Black Solicitors,  
Linenhall House  
13 Linenhall St,  
Belfast,  
BT2 8AA

## **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 ordained 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 normally held at least nine times in each year. To be chosen for the office of the eldership in the congregation a person must be a voting member and a regular attendant on 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. Alexandra congregation of the Presbyterian Church has been assigned to the North Belfast 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 each 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 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.

Alexandra 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 missional purpose is to worship God; to share the good news of Jesus Christ with all and, in particular, with those in our parish community; to enable believers to mature in their faith and to deepen their fellowship, equipping them for the ministry of reaching out to others in spiritual and personal need.

As a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, we believe that the Bible is the supreme authority over all we do, and that the Westminster Confession of Faith, along with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms set out what we understand the Bible teaches on key matters of Christian faith and practice.

Our vision is, by the grace of God, to be an inclusive, welcoming community of Christ's people of all ages, for all ages which:

- is increasingly characterised by love for God, and love and concern for others;
- is committed to the Christian gospel as revealed in the Bible;
- is relevant to people of this time and community.

The congregation aims to live out its Mission and Vision as a family of God's people by being:

- A Covenant Community: where our relationships are rooted in the promises of God by living faithfully for Him and for one another.
- An Outward looking Community: where we want the blessings of God that belong to us in the gospel to become blessings for others beyond the bounds of our community.
- An Intergenerational Community: where older members are cared for and where established members intentionally take the lead to engage with, encourage and nurture younger members to maturity in Christ.

### **ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES**

The congregation meets for worship every Sunday, which is open and welcoming to both members and to visitors. The Sacrament of the Lords Supper is normally observed on 4 occasions during the year and all those who profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are admitted to the Lord's Supper. Membership is open to all who have been baptised, who have made a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and who have contributed to the funds of the congregation. The congregation holds regular "Connect" (small group) bible study meetings and times of prayer. It also has a wide range of organisations including:

- Creche
- Kids For Christ (Sunday School)
- Ignite (Youth Fellowship)
- Crochet Class
- Good News Club
- Presbyterian Women
- Time For You (Ladies support Group)
- The Wee Café
- Alexandra Missionary Fellowship
- Alexandra Art Club
- C&C (Coffee & Care)
- Alexandra Church Choir
- Boy's Brigade – Anchor Boys, Junior Section & Company Section
- Buggy Buddies (Mums and Tots)
- Girls Allowed (Ladies Group)
- Nite Lite (Community Outreach and support group)

Audio and video recordings of services of worship were introduced in 2020 and these have continued and enable those who are unable to attend in person to engage in worship. Other activities such as a weekly prayer-time and bible study groups continued to meet both in person and online using Zoom.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

### **Worship and prayer**

The congregation normally met for socially distanced worship each Sunday at 11.00am and as announced in the evening at 6.30pm. During the week the Bible Study and Prayer Times (online and in person) provides an opportunity for members to meet together for fellowship, to study the scriptures and for a time of prayer.

As well as our regular services during the year we gave thanks for lives completed and seek to comfort those who had been bereaved.

At 31 December 2023 there were 85 communicant members and 209 families connected with the congregation. The average weekly attendance at morning worship was 99.

### **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, an elder, or another member of the congregation.

### **Mission and outreach**

At a local level the congregation supports the North Belfast Food Bank, which operates under the guidance of the Trussell Trust, through a monthly collection of long-life food items.

We also provide "Free Food Friday" each week to distribute mainly fresh food items for use across the local community.

A fundamental element of our purpose as a Church is to reach out to the community around us and share our faith as well as to help meet the needs of our neighbours. This work includes a significant and increasing number of people of all ages who do not attend church of any denomination.

In October 2021, the Trustee appointed a Community Mission Worker for a period of 3 years, supported by the Council for Mission in Ireland of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and by the Urban Mission Trust of the North Belfast Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

The congregation also supports the work of NITE LITE North Belfast which provides assistance and support (practically and spiritually) in local social clubs and on the Shore Road late on Friday nights.

## **Alexandra Organisations and Activities**

The various organisations listed earlier meet in our halls at various times throughout the week providing activities and services for all ages. Other community concerts, events and fund raisers take place in our halls during the year, and we welcome these as opportunities to establish relationships with the people who attend.

All of our activities and organisations are open to all, and we are proud of the diverse nature of our membership and attendees.

During 2023 a total of 14,512 was donated to Missions and other charitable agencies.

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 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, Sunday School project and any other special appeals that are launched by the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in response to a major catastrophe.

## **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 congregations and the wider structures of the church.

## **General Assembly**

The minister and one of our elders were nominated to attend the meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland held in Assembly Buildings, Belfast.

## **Property**

We have an extensive suite of buildings located over two sites as follows:

- Church premises situated at 80 York Road, Belfast BT15 3HF, incorporating the Knowles Memorial Halls accessed from Castleton Avenue, BT15 3ED
- The Church Manse situated at 14 Lismoyne Park, Belfast BT15 5HF.

During 2023, a major renovation scheme was completed, installing a damp course in the Knowles Memorial Halls, together with a new kitchen and Gent's Toilets, together with associated redecoration across the ground floor, at a cost of £36,535, of which £35,882 was donated by the congregation by 31<sup>st</sup> December and an additional £515 raised at a fundraising concert. In addition, during the year a total of £19,162 was spent on general maintenance.

## Organisations

Alexandra congregation has a wide range of organisations catering for all ages. They meet throughout the week at various times and our halls are fully utilised.

What are they?	Demographics	When meet?	Purpose	Numbers Attending	Notes
KFC and Creche	Children 0 – 11 years	Every Sunday morning during worship	Teaching	10	Children of families at worship
AV & Sound Team	Teens and adults	Sundays	Worship, Relationships	5	
Choir	Adults	Sundays	Worship	9	Organist, Drummer and Choir
Ignite	Teens 11 – 18 years	Alternate Sunday evenings	Evangelism, Discipleship	12	Youth Fellowship. Intentional link with BB Company.
Messy Church	Families with young children	Sunday afternoon – 4 times/year	Evangelism, Community	80-100	Crafts, worship, food. Intentional link from other activities into families
Crochet Group	Ladies 50+	Monday evening 6.30 – 8pm	Pastoral, Fellowship	25	Craft group
Connect Groups	Adults	Fortnightly Bible Study - Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday evenings, Wednesday lunchtime	Discipleship, Fellowship	30	Small groups meeting in homes and in Church Halls. One group is focused on young adults

Prayer for Schools	Adults	Tuesday 10.25 – 11.15	Community	12	Open to others in area. Close liaison with local schools. Led by Elder who is a School Governor.
Time for U	Adults 50+	Tuesday lunchtime	Fellowship, Community, Relationships	12	Liaise with Ulster Scots for outings and events.
Good News Club	Children 5-11 years	Tuesday 7 – 8pm	Evangelism	20	Intentional link with Messy Church, Altogether Worship.
PW	Ladies 40+	Tuesday 7.45 – 9pm	Missions, Fellowship	30	
58 <sup>th</sup> Old Boys Outdoor Bowling Club	14 – 80+ years	Tuesday and Saturday during Summer	Community, Relationships	10	
Wee Café	Adults	Wednesday 10 – 12noon	Evangelism, Community	25	Open to community, free of charge.
Dreamscheme	Teens 11-18 years	Youth Club Wednesday 6.30 – 8.30	Evangelism, Community	12	Partnership with Dreamscheme on our premises. Includes a summer sports camp.
Alexandra at Prayer	Adults	Wednesday 7.30 – 9pm (fortnightly)	Discipleship, Fellowship	12	Alternates online and in Manse
Alexandra Missionary Fellowship	Adults	Wednesday 7.30 – 9pm (monthly)	Missions, Fellowship, Discipleship	12	

Alexandra Art Club	Adults	Thursday 10.30 – 12.30pm	Community, Fellowship	10	Craft group
Reading in Schools	Adults	Thursday mornings	Community, Relationships	5	Going to Primary School to support 1-1 reading with children.
C&C	Adult ladies	Thursday 1.30 – 4pm	Pastoral, Fellowship	30	Mainly elderly or living alone.
Boys Brigade, Anchor Boys, Junior Section and Company	Boys 5 – 18 years	Thursday 6.30 – 9.30	Evangelism, Community	50	Intentional link with: Anchors & Juniors – Messy Church, Altogether Worship. Company – Ignite, Lads and Dads
Buggy Buddies	Infants and mothers	Friday 9.30 – 12.00	Evangelism, Community	30	Intentional link with Messy Church, Altogether Worship
Nite Lite	Adults	Friday 10pm – 1am	Evangelism, Community, Relationships	6	Caravan on Shore Road to reach into our community. Also visiting McDonald Centre at Crusaders.
Alexandra Newsletter	N/A	3 times / year	Fellowship	N/A	Update on life and work across congregation
Holiday Bible Club	Children 5-11 years	1 week (mornings) in summer	Evangelism, Community	30	Intentional link with other activities leading to Sunday breakfast and Altogether Worship
Summer Scheme	Teens	August	Evangelism, Relationships	15	Outings and activities with an epilogue. Intentional link with

Door to Door	Adults	Summer	Community, Evangelism, Relationships	25	Call at homes in parish with welcome, invitation and offer of prayer.
Easter Outreach	Adults	March/April	Community, Evangelism, Relationships	20	Jennymount Industrial Park Coffee and Invitations. Good Friday 250 hot Cross Buns to local businesses and neighbours.
Community Christmas Tree	Families	December	Community, Evangelism	100	Partnership with RoC, Loyal Orders, Crusaders Football Club.
Girls Allowed	Adult Ladies	Friday night – 4 times/year	Community, Fellowship	50	
Lads & Dads	Teens and Men	Saturday night – 4 times / year	Evangelism, Relationships	30	Boys with fathers / grandfathers. Includes Men's Breakfast, Games nights, etc.

The purpose of all of these organisations is to serve our community and fulfil our Christian calling as a church which reaches out to the community around it while at the same time providing fellowship and teaching for our existing members.

The Congregation also partners with the Trussell Trust to support their North Belfast Foodbank, which offers food support to anyone in need who is referred to them by a wide range of recognised agencies. In addition, under the FareShare program, we take fresh food, from local supermarkets to make available to our community.

All organisations are open to everyone, and religious background is irrelevant, as we seek to live out our mission.

The programs are wide and varied and relevant to the specific ages involved. The emphasis is always on the needs of the members and providing fellowship, fun and teaching.

Proper arrangements for child protection and leadership training are provided and the standards and procedures of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland through Taking Care are implemented in full.

## **Volunteers**

The Trustees thank God and wish to acknowledge their deep appreciation of those who give freely of their time by serving on the Congregational Committee and by leading, helping and supporting our 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 general 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 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 through the use of 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 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 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 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 our members' contributions through the Weekly Freewill Offering. There were 130 contributors during the year (113 in previous year, 2022) donating a total of £77,410 (£64,775 in previous year, 2022).

Total receipts for the year, were £201,284, compared to £172,195 in the previous year. Our Gift Aid return was higher; members contributed to our rebuilding project, significant grants came from the North Belfast Presbytery's Urban Mission Trust Fund and the PCI's Council for Mission in Ireland – affording us the employment of an Outreach Mission Worker; and our 'Organisations' income was up considerably.

Total expenditure increased from £166,176 to £200,021 at the end of 2022 (£36,535 was incurred by renovations).

At the end of 2023 NET FUNDS carried forward were £133,858, (£96,131 unrestricted and £37,727 restricted), compared to £132,595 at the end of 2022 (£90,147 unrestricted and £42,448 restricted).

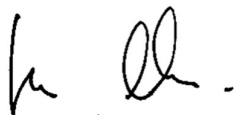
## STATEMENT OF TRUSTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

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.

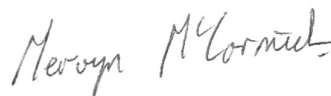
As the congregation's total income does not exceed £250,000, the Trustees have elected under Section 64(3) of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 208 to prepare a receipts and payment account and a statement of assets and liabilities.

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.

Approved by the Kirk Session of Alexandra Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024 and signed on its behalf by



Rev. Ian Cahoon



Mervyn McCormick

21/10/2024

21/10/2024