

FOR INFORMATION

The following body is not under the control of the General Assembly. The report is included for information only.

PRESBYTERIAN CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

Dr Paul Gray (Executive Secretary) reports:

1. The Presbyterian Children's Society exists to support children in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. It works mainly through ministers to alleviate poverty and financial hardship for these children and their families. This is done mostly through regular and exceptional grants. The Society is currently assisting approximately 810 children in 420 families in over 200 congregations throughout Ireland.
2. The year 2018 proved to be a challenging one for the Society. The workload continued to increase with numbers being helped rising to around 820 children by the end of the year. Exceptional grants, most being paid at the maximum level of £600, were in demand and 147 were paid to Presbyterian families and their children in a variety of demanding, stressful and in some cases harrowing circumstances. Grants in the summer and at Christmas, for families receiving regular help, were paid at a rate of £100 per child. Every family assisted regularly by the Society received between £1,100 and £2,100 depending on family size. The Society paid almost two thirds of a millions pounds in grants during 2018.
3. The range of circumstances of families helped by the Society is extremely wide. Presbyterian children from backgrounds of separation, divorce, bereavement, single parenthood or where a parent is in long term hospital care, prison or is disabled, are all aided by the Society. Increasingly 'in work poverty' situations are reflected in applications to the Society. In all situations the Society's focus is on helping a child or children within a family to fulfil their potential in life regardless of their background.
4. The Society was involved in assisting a number of families in financial need to attend the PCI Family Holiday in Castlewellan. Also this year the Society was able to assist in providing small grants to Presbyterian congregations to help in their ministry to children with additional needs. In both these areas the Society greatly values cooperation with the staff and Council for Congregational Life and Witness. Indeed the Society values the help of all Councils and their staff within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
5. Whilst the Society is not under the control of the General Assembly it works closely with the Church through its ministers. It is also working with relevant General Assembly Councils to ensure mongregations have appropriate resources to equip them in helping families in financial need.

6. The Society's work is independently supported by Presbyterian congregations and the Society gives thanks to all those who support the Society prayerfully, practically and financially throughout the year. The Society also welcomes enquiries about how it might assist children and families in need within any Presbyterian congregation. The coming year 2019 will be a period of transition with the retirement of Dr Paul Gray after 31 years as Executive Secretary and the appointment of his successor, Mr Jason Nicholson, on 1 May 2019. The Society commends its work for the continued prayerful and financial support of the Church.

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**PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF IRELAND**

Very Rev Dr John Lockington writes:

The Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland reports that throughout 2018 it has continued to promote the study of the historic Churches of the Presbyterian order in Ireland, and the contributions they have made to Irish Society and the wider world.

We have sought to achieve this through our programme of talks, lectures, visits and through our publications and website

1. We have continued to operate in line with the requirements of the Charity Commission, both in how we present our accounts and also as we seek to meet other requirements as they are notified to us. We have tried to do this with great care and we believe we have been able to operate as a responsible charity.
2. For the past two years we have had to live with uncertainty regarding our future accommodation. This year, events have moved rapidly. The relocation of the Society from College Green to Assembly Buildings was the major factor affecting our finances during 2018. Expenditure of some £16,700 was incurred in the move – this covered the physical relocation of all items, transfer and re-erection of the mobile shelving, installation of a water detection system and the purchase of minor furniture items. Against this, we are indebted to the Ulster Scots Agency who contributed some £13,400 towards the relocation, leaving a cost of about £3,400 to be met by the Society. The disruption of the relocation had a slight knock-on impact on income because of the necessary closure during the move. The annual grant from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland remains the main source of income for the Society, augmented by donations from the other Churches of the Presbyterian order. Most of the expenditure items were of the same order as in the previous year, the major area being the cost of leasing and servicing the Society's premises. Expenditure continues to be carefully controlled and all areas are examined regularly for economies, so that the best value for money is obtained.
3. We have not been able to do everything we would have liked to do, and we will still need to seek additional sources of funding in order to build upon what we have been given, and to achieve things which we cannot as yet afford, and especially the provision of additional rolling shelving for our growing archive material. The new location at the main entrance to the Assembly Buildings will, we believe, increase our contact with the members of the Presbyterian Church who come to the

Church offices or the Assembly Hall, as well as to those who use the excellent Conference Centre, to students living in residences, and to the thousands of visitors to Belfast who stay in the increasing number of local hotels.

4. In spite of our major preoccupation with relocation, we have managed to sustain an excellent programme of lectures, and other less formal events. Attendances have been most encouraging, and it has been good to see a number of younger scholars featuring in our events. Our annual field trip focussed this year on the Banbridge area, and proved most enjoyable and informative.
5. During the year, we produced our annual Bulletin, and towards the end of the year Dr W P Addley's major booklet on Hunter of Knock which we think will attract favourable attention. We have again experienced some frustration that other projected work has taken longer than intended, for several reasons, and not least time-consuming problems in dealing with hard to decipher manuscripts. The revised Publication policy drafted by the Publication Committee has now been accepted by the Council.
6. The move to Assembly Buildings enables us to co-operate with the new visitor exhibition in the reception area, our immediate neighbour. We have worked closely with the task group identifying suitable material for display. We hope you will enjoy the first such display, and look out for what is planned for the future. We are looking forward to sharing in an event shortly when both the visitor exhibition area and our own new premises will be officially opened by the Moderator.
7. The Society welcomes donations of books, pamphlets, congregational histories and suitable artefacts, minute books and old-style communion tokens. These may be deposited with the Society either as a gift or as an indefinite loan. We hold many Synod and Presbytery records, and are delighted that an increasing number of Congregational records are also being entrusted to our care.
8. The society continues to share information with other organisations, agencies and blogs, which help us to raise our profile and publicise our publications. We have 600 followers on Facebook which can be accessed via the blog icon on the home page of our website. This keeps a wider public informed about new books and events.
9. The Society's website continues to be one of our principal means of communicating with the general public, and this is reflected by the numbers using it, and joining the Society as Associate Members. We work hard to improve the number and range of the articles on our history page, and in the updating and presentation of *A History of Congregations*. Copies of *The Bulletin* up to 2012 can now be viewed on the Website.
10. One of our disappointments this year is that we have not made as much progress in working through our Action Plan as had hoped. We can only plead that the circumstances of this hectic year, and our preoccupation with buildings and relocation have been more than

enough to cope with. This is a suitable point to record our gratitude to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk of Assembly who have given so much time and thought to our concerns, to the working Committee set up by Council, and to our volunteers, and especially those who worked through the heat of summer to have everything put in place. Most of all we pay tribute to our Librarian and Archivist for her magnificent work on our behalf, and her enormous enthusiasm and vision for the Society

11. We continue to be really grateful to our volunteers who help us out for a few hours each week, filing, classifying library books for our electronic catalogue, indexing and transcribing records, and preparing mailings. We will need more help than ever in the months ahead, and the Librarian would be glad to hear from anyone who might be able to do this for us.

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OLD AGE FUND, WOMEN'S FUND AND INDIGENT LADIES' FUND

1. The directors report that, during the last financial year which ended 31st December 2018, 106 beneficiaries (47 in the Old Age Fund, 36 in the Women's Fund and 23 in the Indigent Ladies' Fund) received grants.
2. The changes in beneficiaries during the year are as follows:

Beneficiaries receiving Quarterly Grant	Presbyterian Old Age Fund	Indigent Women's Fund	Ladies' Fund	TOTAL
At 1 January 2018	41	29	23	93
New Grants provided	5	4	–	9
Deaths	(1)	–	(1)	(2)
Grants no longer required	(2)	(2)	–	(4)
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At 31 December 2018	43	31	22	96
Beneficiaries receiving one-off donations	1	3	–	4
Deaths and Grants no longer required (as above)	3	2	1	6
Number of Beneficiaries receiving assistance during the year	47	36	23	106

3. The total distribution of the Funds in grants, donations and gifts was £181,065 (£77,716 from the Old Age Fund, £59,400 from the Women's Fund and £43,949 from the Indigent Ladies' Fund).
4. An annual grant of £1,440, paid quarterly, was sent to beneficiaries during the year (2017: £1,440).
5. A 'Special Gift' of £360 (2017: £360) was sent to every beneficiary prior to Christmas.
6. During the year the directors responded sympathetically to various problems which had been brought to their attention. They gave one-off donations, as needed, to assist in particular cases where immediate financial aid was more appropriate than annual grants. Ministers are asked to bear in mind the possibility of help from these funds in similar cases connected with their own congregations.
7. The Directors assure the Church that all monies that come to the Funds are carefully and wisely spent.

8. The directors of the Funds deeply appreciate the kindness and thoughtfulness of those who have remembered the work of the Funds either by gift or bequest, and hope that their example may encourage others to support this vital aspect of the Church's outreach.
9. The Directors of the Funds wish to thank the Staff for the sensitive and sympathetic way in which they carried out the efficient administration of the Funds during the year.