

# TRUSTEES REPORT 2021

## & FINANCIAL STATEMENTS



**The Congregational Leadership  
of The Sisters of Mercy**





# **The Congregational Leadership of The Sisters of Mercy Trustees Report 2021**

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The Trustees present their Annual Report together with the Audited Financial Statements of The Congregational Leadership of the Sisters of Mercy (the "Congregational Leadership") for the year ended 31 December 2021. The Trustees of this Charity hold overall responsibility for the life and mission of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy. Their role is to guide, inspire, animate and unify the Congregation for Mission. They confirm that the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Congregational Leadership comply with current best practice, the requirements of the Constitution of The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (Charities SORP FRS 102) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" issued in October 2019.

## The Story of the Sisters of Mercy

The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy is an international Roman Catholic Religious Congregation founded in 1831 by Catherine McAuley.

Catherine, influenced by her Christian faith, used her inheritance to set up a centre in Baggot Street from which she and her early companions responded to the needs of people disadvantaged in society.





The Sisters of Mercy have been engaged in children's needs and development since the opening of the first House of Mercy in Baggot Street, Dublin in 1827.

Throughout Ireland, this outreach continued through the years in more formal settings such as orphanages, industrial schools, group homes as well as in after-care facilities for those who had left their direct care.

Catherine knew that providing basic education would help people improve their lives. The Sisters of Mercy also recognized and responded to the need to improve healthcare.

In the years that followed their founding, the Sisters of Mercy established schools and hospitals and cared in whatever way possible for the needs of the people who were poorest.



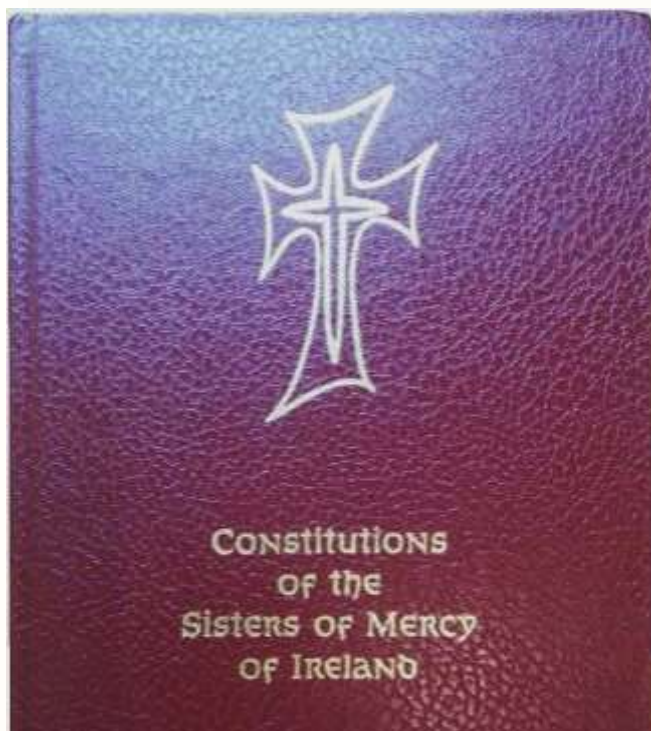
The Sisters were to the fore in social work as it developed and did pioneering work in the area of addiction and social service centres in the past and more recently in the area of care of the earth .

## WHERE WE ARE NOW

The **Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy** (headquarters in Dublin) has six Provinces and one Region; Four of these are in Ireland, one in Kenya, one in South Africa and a Region in the United States. South Central Province has a mission in Brazil. The Southern Province has a mission in Peru.



## MISSION



*“The mission of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy is to bear witness to the compassionate and merciful love of God.*

*Our administration of temporal goods must express the Gospel call to justice, charity and almsgiving...*

*We use these goods for our common life, for the various apostolates of mercy and for the needs of the Church and especially for the poor and deprived.”*

*Constitutions 104 (1985)*

## Charitable Purpose

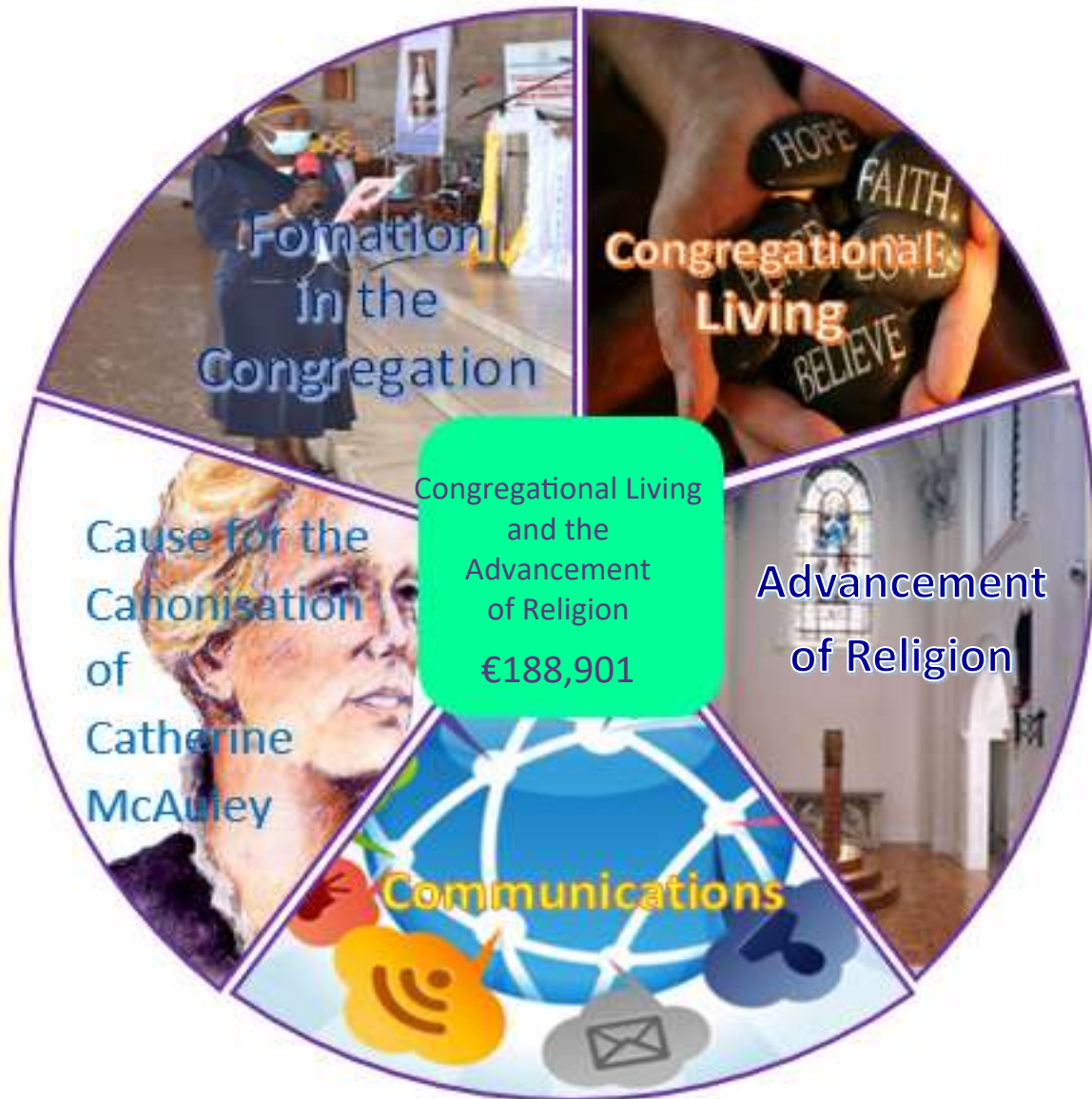
- ◇ Advancement of Religion
- ◇ Relief of Poverty or Economic hardship including those in need Spiritually as well as Materially

**We carry out the objectives/purposes of the charity through the following activities and ministries:**

1. Congregational Living and the advancement of Religion
2. Relief of Poverty, Promotion of Education, Justice and other Charitable Activities
3. Positive Impact Investing
4. Heritage including Archives and upkeep of Listed Assets



## Summary View



### ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGION

As the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy is a Religious Congregation, advancement of Religion is of prime importance to the Trustees. All aspects of the Charity's work involve the advancement of religion. The Trustees continue to assess the Charity's work and to search for appropriate ways of carrying out its mission in today's world in collaboration and partnership with others.

## INITIAL FORMATION

The admission and formation of **new members** to the Congregation is an important aspect of our life and mission. Our Congregational Formation Guidelines ***Journeying into Mercy*** outline the pathway to full membership. Initial formation takes place in three stages, **Pre-novitiate**, **Novitiate** and **Temporary Profession** culminating in **Perpetual Vows**.

In 2021, as a result of Covid-19, members of the Congregational Leadership Team were unable to visit with members – especially our Provinces and Region outside of Ireland. However, when needed, contact via phone and zoom was maintained with leadership of the South Central and Kenyan Provinces where initial formation is taking place.



A four month long Ongoing Formation Course from March to June of 2021, delivered via zoom, was attended by a large cross section of all members (approx. 450)

The workshop topics included:

1. Social Mystic: Who Me?
2. Graced Companionship
3. The Grace of Resilience
4. Mission: The Never-Ending Story

*I want to thank you and Mary Pat Garvin for facilitating the successful Formation Programme*

*Despite missing parts of some Sessions, I did get a good sense of all sessions and certainly put the second one to very good use.*

*Mary Pat is an excellent presenter/teacher.*

*I would, however, consider that the large group did not facilitate good discussion, so I skipped that!*

*We were working on Chapter Call 2018 at the time and Mary Pat's unpacking of Mission, Ministry and Charism was very helpful. It gave sisters a tangible interest when it came to identifying one of these three for our special commitment. The fact that even some of the content of the programme could be incorporated into our own reflections and prayer is a blessing.*

The Congregation in Ireland has primary responsibility for the promotion of Catherine McAuley's canonization cause. The work on the cause began in 1903, sixty years after the death of Catherine and still continues.

Many people ask for prayers through the intercession of Venerable Catherine McAuley. Requests come via the **Internet, WhatsApp, Social Media, hand written** requests, and through **face-to-face meetings**. People ask for prayers for **healing, family harmony, children, grand-children**, for **success in examinations and interviews**, for relatives who are facing **financial, housing, educational difficulties, bereavement, separation, and addiction**.



In ***God Alone***, a new film launched in 2019, is very helpful in promoting the cause. It opens up avenues for people to avail of the help of **prayer** through the intercession of Catherine McAuley.

Teachers in CEIST schools (*Catholic Education An Irish Schools Trust*) in Ireland find that young people are enthused and inspired by the story of a very personable and intrepid woman of the 19th Century.

In **2021** the work of bringing forward the **process of Beatification** in regard to the alleged healing which occurred in 2015 continued.

## COMMUNICATION FOR MISSION

The Communications Office of the Congregation is in the service of Mission. The vision is to use whatever means it has at its disposal to express the compassionate presence of God as articulated in the 2018 Congregational Chapter Statement. The office seeks to implement the direction of the Chapter Statement.

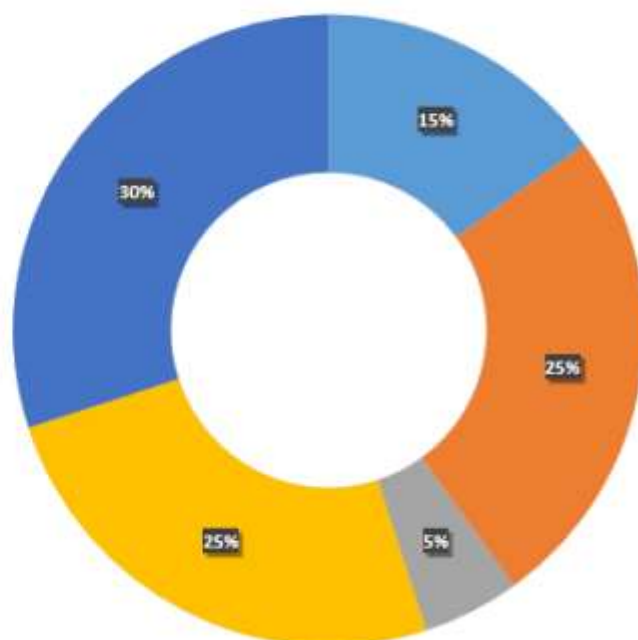
- ◆ *Communication is at the heart of who we are as people of faith.*
- ◆ *It is central to our understanding of ourselves and of God.*
- ◆ *Communicating is integral to God's nature and brought to its highest level in the Word of God, made flesh in Christ.*

*In the year 2021 we progressed our Communications with attention to:*

- ◆ *Technical updating to enhance presentation of material*
- ◆ *Updating of Ministry section on website*
- ◆ *Monthly updating of videos according to relevant themes*
- ◆ *Use of Podcasts and vimeos to highlight life stories and liturgical occasions*
- ◆ *Slide shows from contributions across the Congregation, to mark significant International Days*

### Time spent on Communications Activities 2021

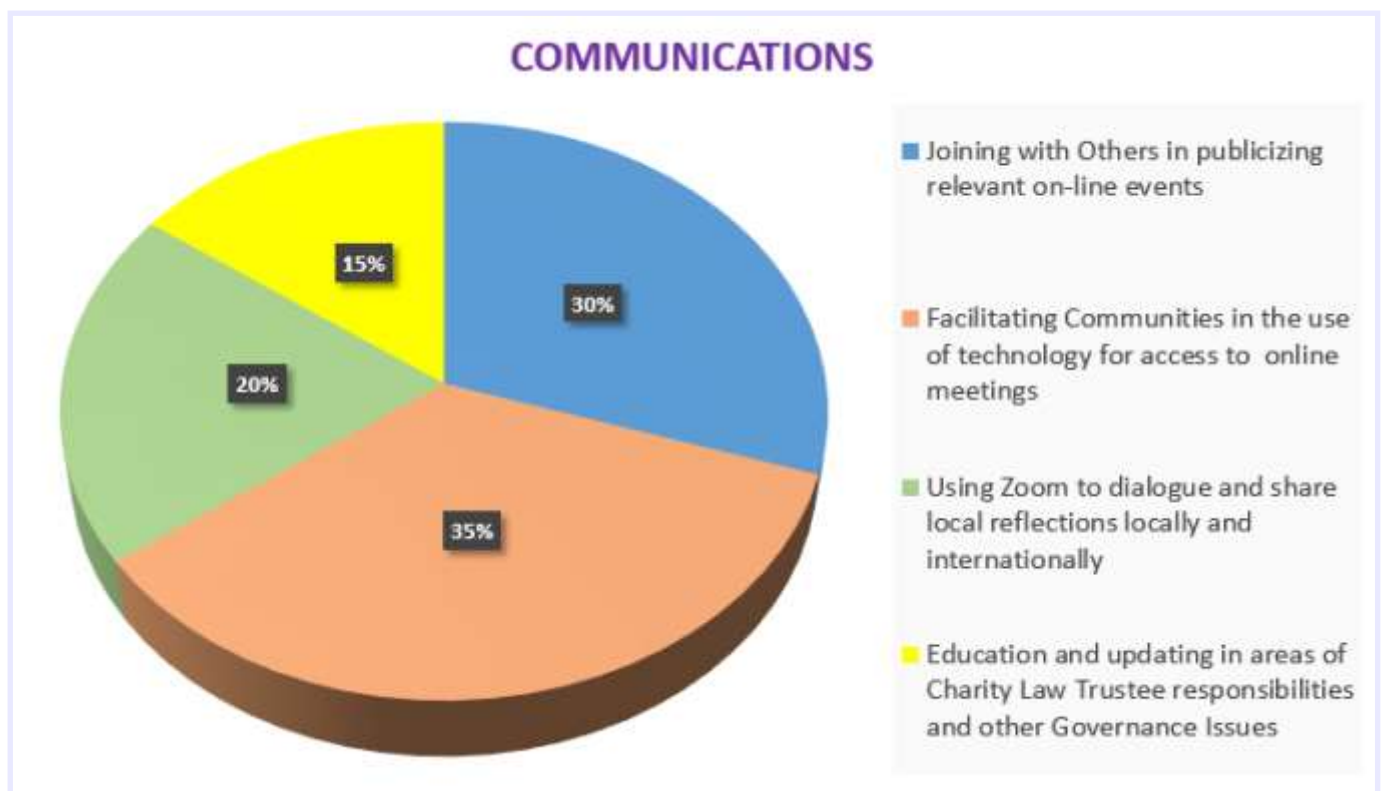
- Technical updating to enhance presentation of material
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The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy has responded to the growing development of on-line communication by:

- ◆ *Joining with Others in publicizing relevant on-line events;*
- ◆ *Facilitating Communities in the use of technology for access to on-line meetings;*
- ◆ *Using the Zoom medium to share Reflections, Dialogue time, at local, national and international levels.*
- ◆ *Engaging in on-going education and updating, offered on-line in areas of Charity Law, Trustee Responsibility and other Governance issues.*



In 2021 our collaboration with others for the evolution of the Vision in a rapidly changing culture included:

- ◆ *Working with Mercy Global Action for the promotion of the ministry of Advocacy in the Congregation. This included workshops and relevant material to enable effective Advocacy on critical issues of injustice.*
- ◆ *Promoting Advocacy for climate justice with leaders who attended COP26*
- ◆ *Participation in CWR seminars for the development of Communications in religious congregations.*



Over the course of 2021, the average visitor numbers to our website was approximately 20,000 per month. Below is a snapshot of some of the most popular articles:

- ◆ Reflections on how Sisters who live in larger and smaller Religious community houses (both in Ireland and abroad) have dealt with the COVID pandemic
- ◆ Convents which have closed down and what they meant to the local towns people over the years
- ◆ World affairs

**Quotation:**

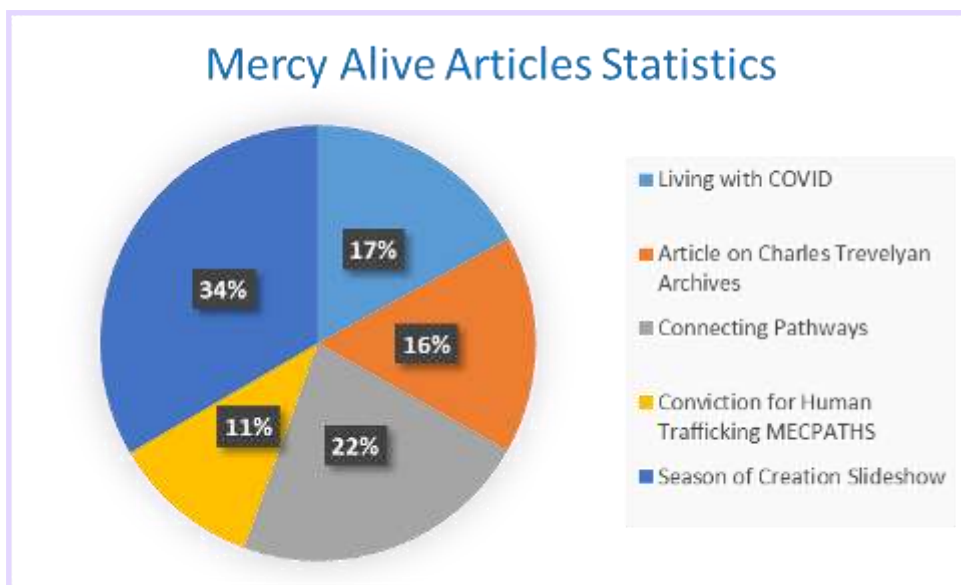
*“Our website is a wonderful resource, inspirational and attractive, helps us to share the Good News with a wider audience, is an instrument for change, a means to help in building a better world, a real storehouse of information and is always kept up to date.”*      *Una Purcell rsm*

**Mercy Alive**

The online newsletter of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy.

*The most popular viewed Articles in 2021 were as follows:*

January	<b>Living with COVID</b>
March	<b>Article on Charles Trevelyan Archives</b>
May	<b>Connecting Pathways</b>
July	<b>Conviction for Human Trafficking MECPATHS</b>
September	<b>Season of Creation Slideshow</b>



## Summary View



Relief of POVERTY,  
Promotion of EDUCATION, JUSTICE and other ACTIVITIES  
**€965,765**

One focus of Mission Development is: EDUCATION



*“Hungry for food, hungry for knowledge”*

*“The school is all about belonging and inclusion”*

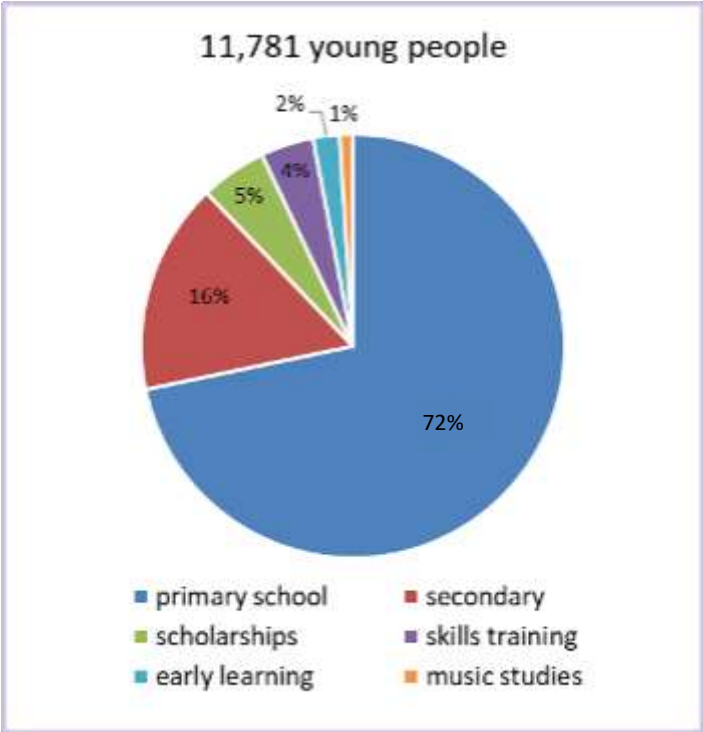
*“Many of our children are carrying pain”*

“We have two partially sighted students doing machine knitting and computer studies. The boy has better sight and leads the girl by the hand. While they struggle, they can and do produce good work. They take part in assembly and read with the book very close to the face. They are a great example to the rest of our students.” (Kenya)



*“Ruth, a second-grader I taught this year lost her parents. In May her father died of Covid, and her mother died of a heart attack the following month. She lost her family but has not lost her smile or her desire to study” (Peru)*

*“We try to share what we know through the lens of Mercy”*



### Catholic Education an Irish Schools Trust

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century brought new challenges which required the creation of new structures to ensure that Catholic education is a viable choice in a pluralist Ireland for those who wish to avail themselves of it. To this end CEIST was set up in 2007 to act as Trustees for the Catholic Secondary Schools for five Religious Congregations including the Sisters of Mercy. CEIST is now an independent autonomous entity.

In 2021 **CEIST** was the **patron of 107 Catholic Voluntary Secondary Schools**. The schools had a total number of **57,319 students**.

The **EDUCENA Foundation** works with the **CEIST Trust** to enable resourcing of trusteeship of Catholic post primary education in Ireland, managing and optimizing the financial resources that will be needed in the future. The task of transferring the schools from the Sisters of Mercy to EDUCENA continues to involve considerable work and expertise on the part of the Charity's trustees and their legal and property advisors.

### Support of Past Residents of Orphanages and Industrial Schools

The **care and education** of children has always been central to the Mercy Ethos. In 1996, following some high profile TV programmes on child care issues, the Congregation established a **helpline and counselling service**. The four Irish Provinces in the Congregation contributed a total of €33,091,144 in property and finance to the 2002 Government *Redress Scheme*.

The findings of the *Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse* (CICA) in 2009 evoked a further practical response from the Sisters of Mercy. The four Irish Provinces pledged a **voluntary contribution** of €20 million in **cash**, as well as **property**, then valued at €11.5 million to the Statutory Fund; this fund was set up by the Government to help former residents of industrial schools. In addition the four Irish Provinces offered the State properties then valued at €80,856,800 and the Voluntary Sector properties then valued at €15,060,000.

### Other Charities/Groups

In 2021 the Trustees received numerous requests from other charities and groups. The Charity responded as generously as possible to a range of requests including UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) who are operating for the past 75 years in emergency situations. A donation was given for their Covax programme "Give a vaccine, get a vaccine" in Kenya. The **MSF** (Medecins sans Frontieres) programme in the Tigray region of Ethiopia received a donation to support the relocation of urgent medical care to the refugee camps in neighbouring Sudan when services were suspended due to the prevailing violent conflicts. Three camps with a total estimated population of 147,000 were the MSF base for their medical work in dealing with a major outbreak of hepatitis E. The activities of the **Hope Foundation** in India also received funding for their hospital in Kolkata where 70 patients in the Covid isolation unit received treatment and over 2,000 families in remote villages of West Bengal were assisted with food, clothing and shelter after Cyclone Yaas wreaked havoc in the region.



# MECPATHS

CHILD TRAFFICKING  
KNOW IT | SEE IT | SAY IT

## OUR Values

### Children's Rights



We advocate for a child's dignity and right to be protected from trafficking for exploitation.

### Justice



Recognising every child's inherent vulnerability, we believe in the right of children to be free from exploitation, which can potentially have a lifelong impact. We uphold their rights by championing the full implementation of international and domestic laws concerning the rights of the child.

### Education



We raise awareness of the reality of child trafficking for exploitation in society today to inform and equip individuals and groups with information that promotes responsible action.

### Collaboration



We acknowledge that child trafficking for exploitation requires a cohesive approach. To this end, we believe in the power of partnership and networking, sharing of resources and experiences, and openness to deliver a multi-faceted response. We value and actively seek partnership with those supporting and working to counter child trafficking for exploitation.

### Compassion



Our work is motivated by our passion for children's rights, and we respond with compassion for the injustice of child trafficking from exploitation.

## OUR 2021 Outputs at a glance





In all of our **PROVINCES** in Ireland, Africa, and the Region in America the Sisters are very conscious of the urgent need to protect the **eco-systems** of the earth.



As a registered lobbyist we made submissions in 2021 with climate action at its core such as requesting that TDs represent to the Party Leaders the need to take on board the recommendations of the Joint Committee on climate action especially to reduce polluting emissions by 7% a year and by an average of 51% by 2030 and to use the Bill to ban the importation of fracked gas and a ban on LNG terminals in Ireland.

**In the official Report on the Mercy Global Presence Process – a process where in 2021 Sisters of Mercy, Associates and partners in Mercy met in regional gatherings to reflect on the final theme of this process which was “Integration” it was noted that this process awakened a new commitment to ecological conversion in all of us.**

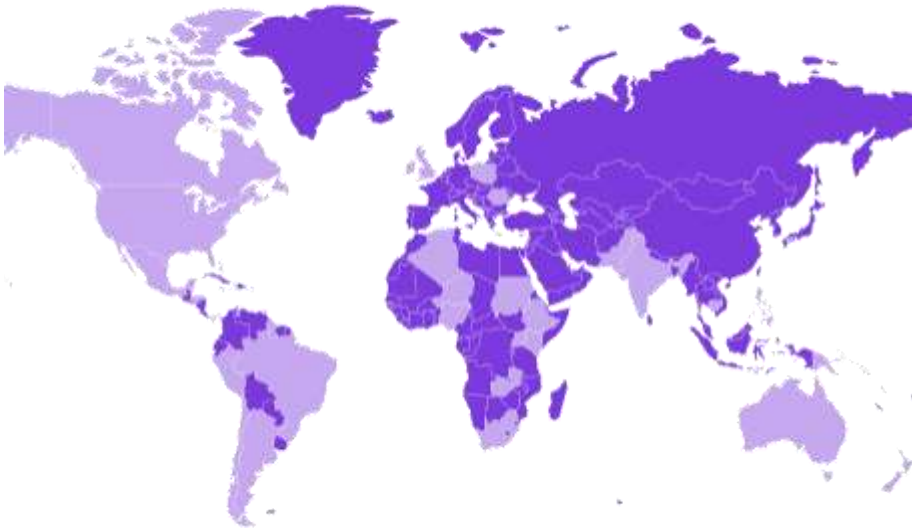
### Quotation:

*“It deepened our understanding of “global”, “mercy”, “presence” and called forth in us “new languages, new theologies, new spiritualities, new ministries, new ways of being church and a new sense of humans living in a sacred communion of all creation.” (Elizabeth Davis rsm)*

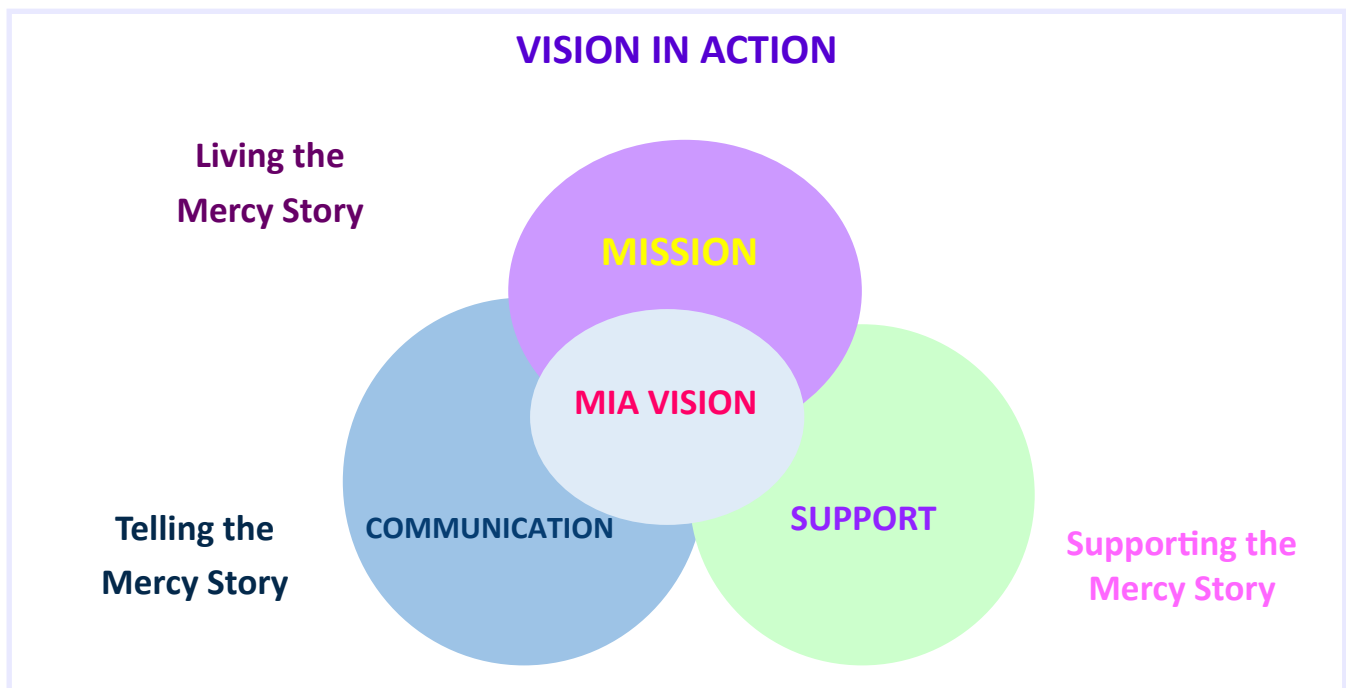
In 2021 the Sisters continued their ministry of ecological education through online seminars, circulation of relevant materials via their website, marking key ecological moments on the international calendar including World Earth Day, World Environment Day and World Oceans Day.

Kenyan botanist, Dr. Stella Simiyu said *“The rural poor depend directly on their natural resource base. This is where their pharmacy is, this is where their supermarket is, this is in fact their fuel station, their power company, their water company. What would happen to you if these things were removed from your local neighbourhood? Therefore, we really cannot afford NOT to invest in environmental conservation.”*





**Mercy International Association** is an association of the leaders of the Mercy Congregations, Institutes and Unions throughout the world. The leaders work together to share some aspects of the common work of the Sisters of Mercy. The diagram below shows its purpose.



## Summary View



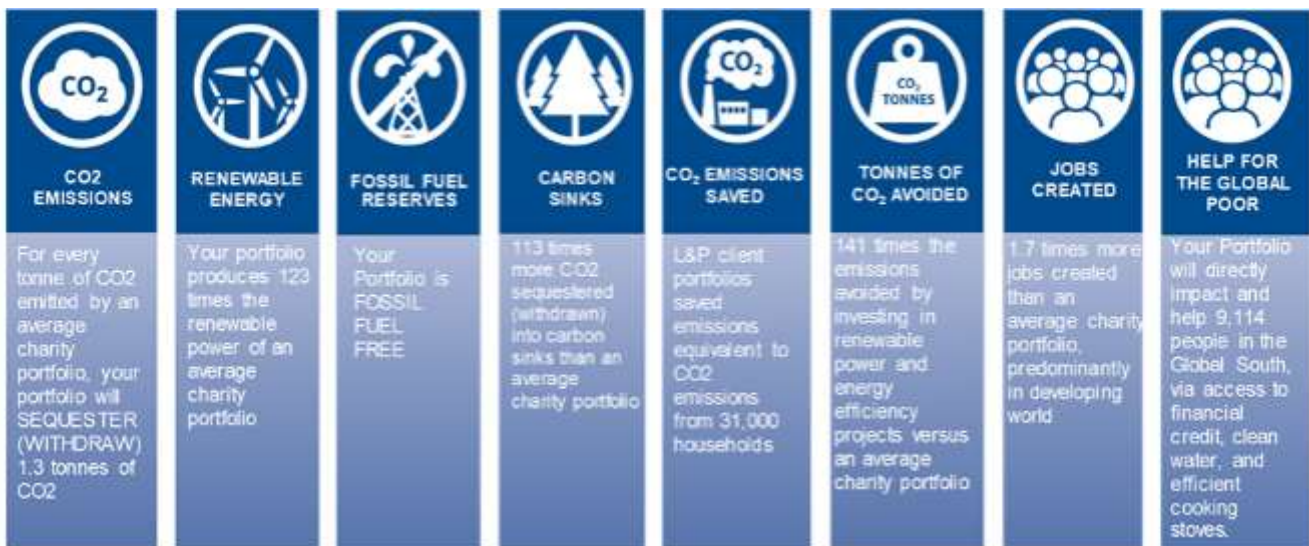


## POSITIVE IMPACT INVESTING

We view our investment portfolio as part of our Mission. Alongside our active Ministries, we also seek to bring about change through our investment portfolios. Some investments can be harmful; for example, investments in fossil fuel companies or armaments companies supports the production of goods that can be highly damaging to the environment or human wellbeing. Avoiding these types of investments is an important step in ensuring that our investment portfolio is not involved in harmful activities. But it is only the first step along the path of what can be achieved.

While avoiding harmful activities is important, we believe that it is even more important to use our investments to bring about positive change in the world. We therefore seek to invest in activities that have beneficial impacts, for both individual wellbeing and for the environment.

We assess these positive impacts under a number of headings that we believe are important measures of how our investments are positively affecting the world around us. Below are some of the positive impacts achieved by the investment portfolio:



### The Portfolio and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

All of the investments within the Portfolio contribute towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs were developed and adopted by all member states of the United Nations to help achieve “a more sustainable future for all”. They represent a call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and promote prosperity and people’s wellbeing by 2030. They integrate and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Achieving the SDGs on a global basis requires collaboration between governments, the private sector, civil society and citizens alike. The Portfolio plays a role in the realisation of the goals.

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Source: UN (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>)

The Sustainable Development Goals are also closely aligned with the charitable objectives of religious organisations. Since the publication of *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis has made a strong commitment to sustainable development. His appeal to “...every person living on this planet for an inclusive dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet”, provides a firm ethical foundation for actions that need to be taken urgently at all levels. Pope Francis’ speech ahead of the United Nations General Assembly’s formal adoption of the 17 SDGs gave further support to the ambitious and transformational vision of the goals.

A comprehensive Ethical and Positive Impact policy ensures the Portfolio remains consistent with the ethos of the charity. The Portfolio currently excludes companies involved in the production of weapons, tobacco, alcohol, pornography, and activities such as gambling and embryonic stem cell research. Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria complements the screening as it improves the overall ESG risk exposure of the Portfolio. In particular, climate risk is addressed through the exclusion of fossil fuel companies and a focus to reduce the carbon footprint of the Portfolio through investment in such areas as renewable energy and forestry.



## Summary View



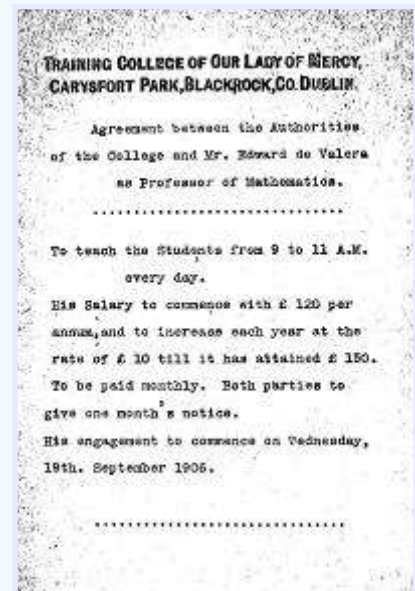
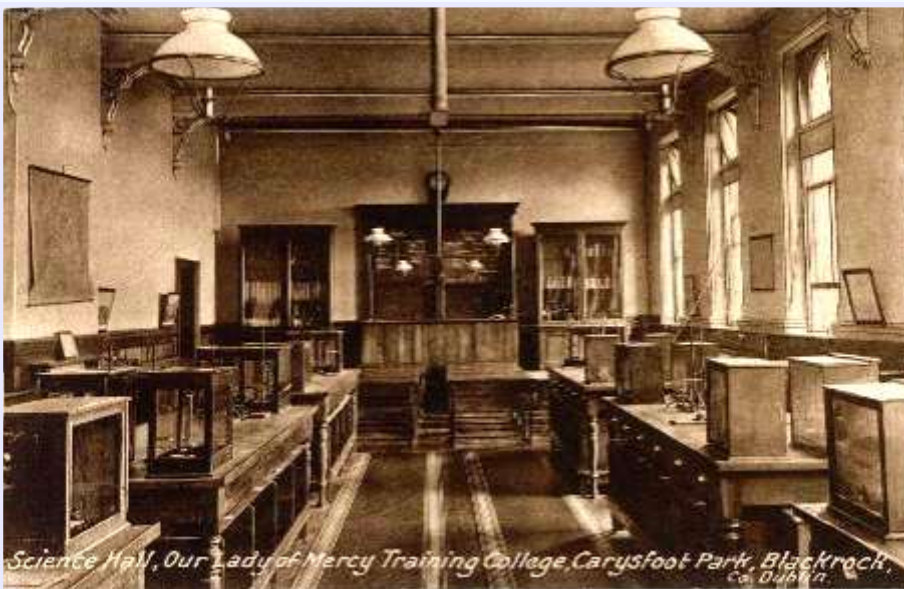
### Protected Structure/Listed Building

Catherine McAuley Centre, 23 Herbert Street which is owned by the Congregational Leadership of the Sisters of Mercy is a protected structure. This building is listed on the planning authority's Record of Protected Structures (RPS). By including it in the RPS, the importance of this structure is recognised. It is legally protected from harm and all future changes to the structure are controlled and managed through the development control process. The Charity is legally required to make sure that this structure does not become endangered through neglect, decay, damage or harm.

## MERCY CONGREGATIONAL ARCHIVES DUBLIN (MCA)

Mercy Archives Service comprises Mercy Congregational Archives (MCA) and six provincial archives, four in Ireland and one each in the Kenya and South Africa provinces. In 2021, one professional archivist worked in MCA, supported by an office manager, a part-time staff member and one volunteer.

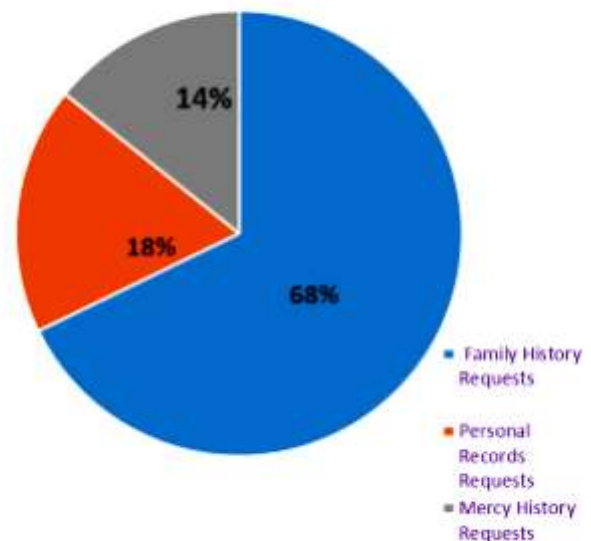
The role of Mercy Archives is to identify, acquire, organise, preserve and make available Congregational records of permanent historical value. Mercy Congregational Archives manages facilities for the retention, preservation and research use of such records. It also serves as a research facility for the study of the Congregation's history and its role in Irish society. It provides reference services to assist in the Congregation's administration and operations.



### Enquiries and Research

239 remote access enquiries were received in 2021. Areas of enquiry included requests for personal data, family history, convent history, educational history nursing history and the architectural history of convents.

Remote Access Requests 2021





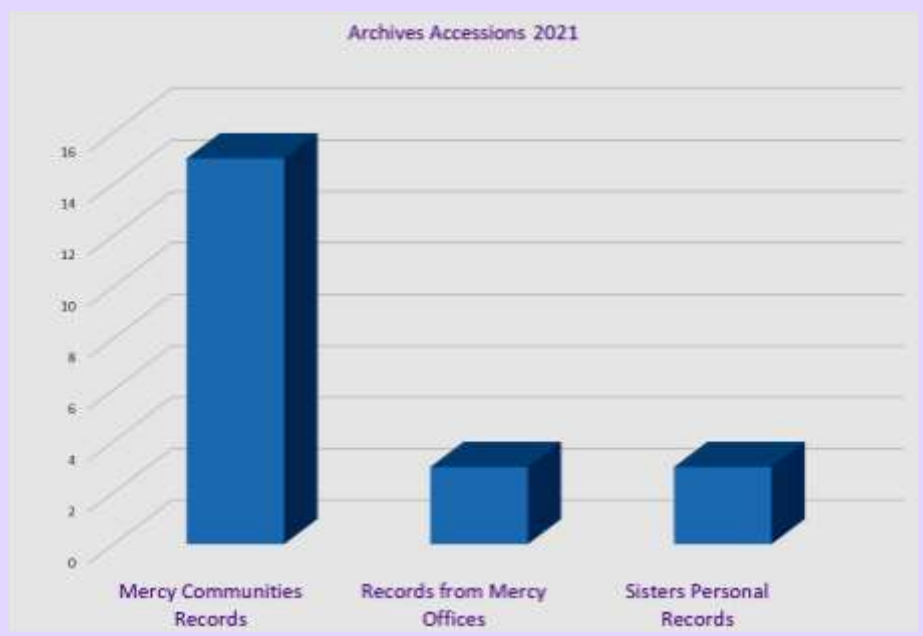
From Baggot Street to Carysfort

3 of the students who completed their first year of training 1902 - 1903 in Baggot Street and transferred to Carysfort Park, to complete their course in 1903 - 1904.  
 Left to right: Mary E. Byrne; Rose Kelly; Sarah Hurst.

Visitors to the reading room researched the Sisters who nursed in the Crimean War, a comparative study of secondary education in an Irish town, nutrition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the teacher training college in Carysfort.

### Accessions

21 accessions were received during 2021 including personal papers, records from communities and from the congregational



### Outreach/Meetings/Events

Publications relating to the Sisters of Mercy were donated to the Central Catholic Library.

Mercy Archive Service is collaborating on a project to digitise the registers of Carysfort Teacher Training College, 1883-1922. The project will be completed by the UCD Digital Library and Convent Collections research team and housed in the UCD Digital Repository.

# FINANCIAL REVIEW

## RESULTS FOR THE YEAR

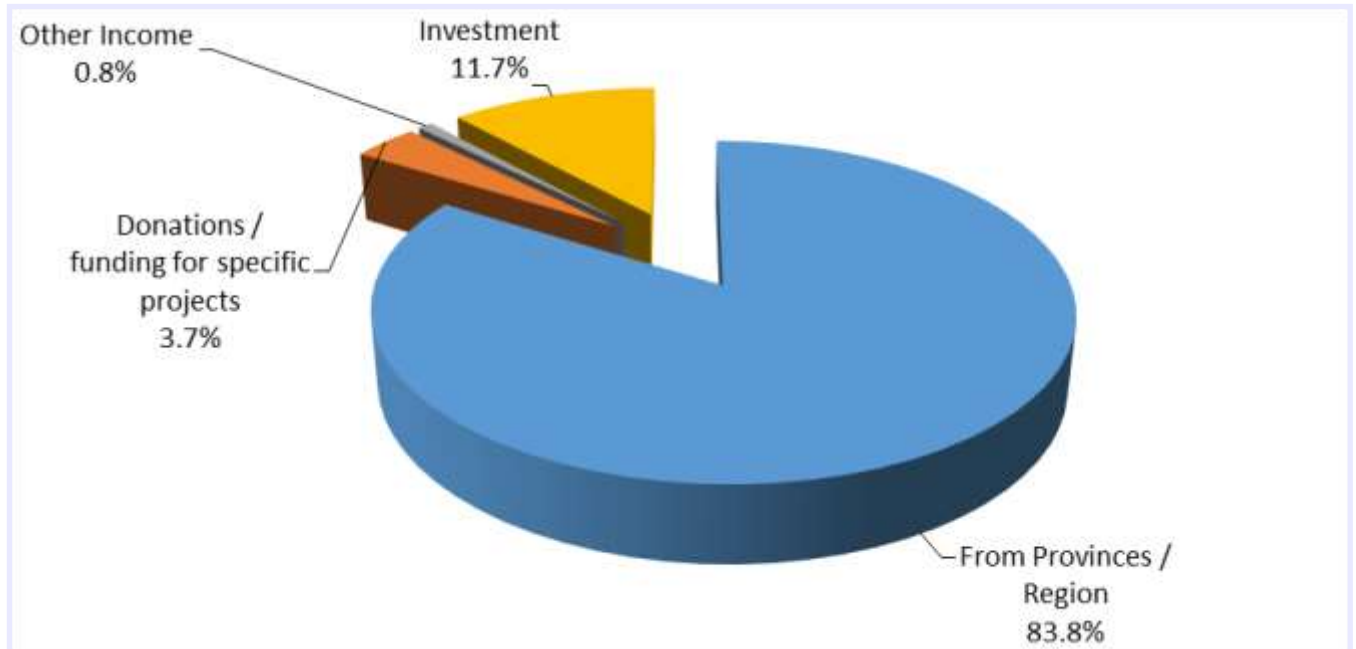
A summary of the year's accounts can be found on page 39 of this report.

### Income - Where our Income Came From

Income for the year totalled €1,012,145:

- ◇ Donations & Legacies income of €885,339: was €847,821 in levies and funding received from the Provinces and Region of the Congregation and €37,518 in restricted donations and restricted funding received for specific projects.
- ◇ Investment Income of €118,373: was the income earned on the Charity's investment portfolio and rental income received.
- ◇ Other Income of €8,433: was miscellaneous income received during the year.

### Breakdown of Income



### Expenditure - where the money is spent

Total expenditure for the year was €1,630,109.

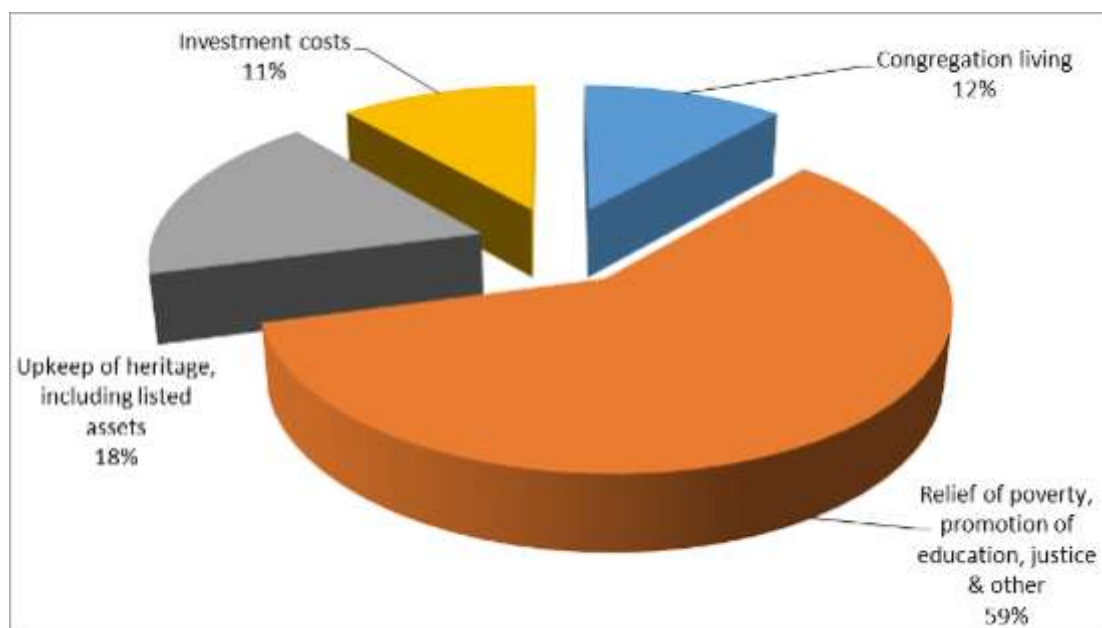
Charitable Activities - of the total, €1,444,678 or 89%, was spent on Charitable Activities:



- ◇ Relief of poverty, promotion of education, justice and other charitable activities, €965,765: this includes expenditure on a number of headings outlined earlier in the report, including Mission Development, MECPATHS and Eco Justice and Lobbying.
- ◇ Upkeep of heritage, including listed assets, €290,012: this includes expenditure on Congregational Archives as referred to earlier in the report. In addition, the Charity owns a protected structure which is listed on the planning authority's Record of Protected Structures (RPS). By including them in the RPS, the importance of this structure is recognised; it is legally protected from harm and all future changes to the structure are controlled and managed through the development control process. The Charity is legally required to make sure that this structure does not become endangered through neglect, decay, damage or harm.
- ◇ Congregational living, the advancement of Religion, €188,901: this includes expenditure on a number of headings outlined earlier in the report such as Promotion of the Cause of Catherine McAuley and Formation. It also includes a depreciation charge of approximately €39,000 as well as the upkeep of the members of the Congregation Leadership Team. The members who receive earned income (salary, pension, stipend, retirement lump sums) donate them to the Congregation and therefore have no independent means of support. Hence the work of the Charity includes the provision of living accommodation and up-skilling/retraining of the members of the Congregation Leadership Team.

Investment costs – in the year, investment costs totalled €185,431.

### Breakdown of Expenditure



### Net Movement in Funds

Net expenditure for the year, therefore, was €617,964. This was before the gain on investment assets, which when taken into account results in a net increase in funds in the year of €3,503,891.

## **Investments**

At 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021, the Charity had investments of €33.0m. The purpose of these funds is to provide investment income to promote the charitable objectives of the Charity and to provide capital growth in the reserves over the medium term. The objective for the investments is to generate a return of 4% per annum while utilising the charity's stated ethical investment policy. In 2020, L&P (Cantor Fitzgerald Ireland) were appointed to act as a Discretionary Investment Manager.

The investment funds have an ethical investment screen; they exclude companies that fall foul of certain ethical criteria, and where possible, favour stocks that provide positive benefits to society. As noted earlier, the Charity also holds a number of Positive Impact Investments that direct money towards fulfilling certain positive ethical criteria. The Trustees, with their investment advisors, review the investments on a regular basis.

## **Policy on Reserves**

At the end of the financial year, the total funds of the charity amounted to €37.1m. Of this, €5,381 is restricted for specific purposes - see Financial Statements note 17. Of the balance, €3.0m is represented by properties and other tangible fixed assets essential for the running of the Charity. The Trustees have designated another €31.4m to provide for Mission and Ministry works and Congregational Living needs. Details are given in note 17 of these Financial Statements. The Trustees will continue to review and reassess these designations on an on-going basis.

Un-designated or general funds amount to €2.7m. This equates to approximately 23 months of unrestricted charitable expenditure. The Trustees consider this reasonable, given the nature of the Charity's work and its commitments.

## PLANS FOR FUTURE

The Congregational Leader and Team will continue to give attention to its governance responsibilities as Trustees of the Charity. They will review its needs and spending plans and make every effort to manage its existing assets as efficiently as possible in order to generate the income necessary to achieve the charity's aims. At the same time the Charity plans to support the various works of the Congregation.



### OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Engage with the **Mission and Strategic Direction** of the Charity/Congregation and guided by the Congregational Chapter Statement 2018.
- ◆ Focus on **researching and exploring structure changes** acknowledging that there is need for more education, preparation, research and exploration of both the canonical and civil implications of taking this step. (Chapter Statement 2018)
- ◆ The Trustees will prepare for, organise and execute an extraordinary general chapter in accordance with the mandate of the 2018 General Chapter.
- ◆ Prepare for Congregation Visitation.
- ◆ The Trustees will continue to collaborate with **Mercy International Association and Mercy Worldwide** in placing **Mercy Global Presence** at the heart of its vision which was embraced in 2019.
- ◆ The Trustees will continue to explore and encourage **new members in vowed religious life** and provide ongoing **Formation Courses**.

- ◆ Continue to **support local and worldwide charities** in times of need and in response to the COVID Pandemic.
- ◆ Update and maintain **office equipment** and communications systems in line with new ways of working as required.
- ◆ Continue to manage facilities and staffing for the Archival retention, preservation and research, with particular emphasis on the employment of an assistant archivist.
- ◆ Continue to identify, **appraise, collect, organise and preserve congregational records** of permanent historical value and make them available as appropriate.
- ◆ Ensure **preservation of the archives** of Mercy in **Kenya, South Africa, and North America**.
- ◆ Continue to work with the wider Congregation to review and update relevant congregational policies.
- ◆ Organise meetings with provinces/region to give clearer focus to mission and ministry on Congregational website.
- ◆ Work to continue on advancing **Mercy Alive** (the online newsletter of the Congregational Leadership Team) to become a more interactive publication incorporating a wider range of Mercy issues.
- ◆ Carry out the plans agreed at the Plenary Conference in 2019.
- ◆ **Encourage membership** to work with CLT in implementing future directions.
- ◆ In the furtherance of the Mercy mission the Trustees will continue to support **MECPATHS** and **eco justice** as they develop their outreach in **accordance with new needs and developments**.
- ◆ **Continue to develop** appropriate ways to respond to the **COVID 19 pandemic** including facilitating hybrid work arrangements.



# STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

## Nature of Governing Document

The governing instrument of the Congregation is the Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy which was adopted by the General Chapter of the Congregation in August 1994 and approved by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life (Rome) in April 1995.

The governmental structure of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy involves a number of inter-connected units, local, regional, provincial and congregational. The nature of the authority in each unit is described in the Constitutions.

## Organisational Structure and Decision Making

The Congregational Leader and members of the Congregational Leadership Team are the Trustees of the Charity. With regard to decision-making the Trustees take responsibility for the overall running of the Charity. Trustees attend formal training courses on the duties of Trustees. They are ultimately responsible for the life, mission, ministry activities and assets of the Congregation. They meet on a regular basis for strategic planning, organisational development, capacity building, review, updating and decision making.

The Trustees have established a number of resource and advisory groups from among members of the Congregation as well as various professional advisors. The function of these groups is to advise the Trustees on different aspects of Stewardship and the general management of the assets of the Province.

There are systems of accountability operational throughout the Congregation. The Congregational Treasurer is appointed by the Congregational Leader with the consent of her team. The Congregational Treasurer administers the affairs of the Congregation under the direction of the Congregational leader and her team. Investments provide the main source of income for the Congregation.



Trustees meet on a **regular basis** to review the **Charity's Assets and Activities**. When necessary they seek advice from the Charity's Advisors. The Congregation is divided into six Provinces and one Region. Each Province is governed by a Provincial Leadership team elected by the members of the Province and the Regional Leadership team elected by members of the Region.

The Trustees visit all areas of the Congregation at least once and more often if required during their term of leadership. The Trustees hold a **Plenary Conference**, when necessary, which is attended by the leadership teams of the entire Congregation. All aspects of the life and mission of the Congregation as well as plans for future mission are discussed and considered during these meetings. The Trustees are in regular contact with the Provincial and Regional Leaders. For effective management, each of the Trustees is designated as a link person to the Provinces and Region. The link person connects with the Provincial and Regional leadership on a regular basis and is constantly updated on the life, mission and ministry activities of the Province and Region.



Congregational | Provincial | Regional Leadership Teams elected in 2018 and 2019

## CONGREGATIONAL POLICIES INCLUDING SAFEGUARDING

The Congregational Leadership Team has the responsibility to ensure that all Congregational **policies and good practice guidelines** are developed, circulated, known and implemented across all areas of the Congregation. In the context of an ever changing society, these policies are regularly reviewed, updated, and/or supplemented.

In 2021, despite the ongoing restrictions of Covid-19, attention was given to the possible updating of some policies and in particular the policies on ***Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons (2018)*** and ***Volunteers (2016)***. A certain emphasis was placed on the rich contents of the policy on ***Mercy Ministries & Projects- Leadership, Management and Succession Planning (2016)*** with a view to having its recommendations more closely adhered to in given situations.



The ***Congregational International Child Safeguarding Policy***, circulated initially in late 2019, was promulgated more widely throughout the Congregation in both 2020 and 2021. All **six Provinces** and the **US Region** submit an annual report to CLT confirming their commitment to best practice in this area. Even in the midst of the pandemic, continuous attention was paid throughout 2021 to this vital area of community and ministry life.

During 2021, in order to promote and ensure the safety and wellbeing of our members, partners and co-workers, the practice, already begun in 2020, of the leadership of all Provinces and the US Region meeting regularly via Zoom was continued. Opportunities for **upskilling**, enhancement of **good practice** as well as a focus on **safety issues** regarding returning to work were shared in a virtual form. During the challenges of 2021, the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy remained committed to a culture of good practice and the promotion of best practice, as identified via our Congregational policies, in all areas of life and ministry.

The Trustees undertake a full risk assessment on an annual basis and monitor progress on a half-yearly basis. This process is supported by the Stewardship Group, who work closely with the Trustees in this area. The Trustees identified the following as being the principal risks to which the Charity is exposed.

### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

Considers the efficiency of the Trustee body. Risks considered include a lack of planning, a Trustee body which lacks sufficient skills or appropriate decision making procedures. Such risks could include a lack of training/induction or poor stewardship of resources—human, financial and property.

#### ***Steps Taken to Mitigate Risk:***

- ◇ Adherence to Chapter Statement which inspires and directs the Strategic Plan.
- ◇ By addressing both Annual and Long Term Plans, holding regular Trustee Meetings which include the monitoring of actual performance against these plans.
- ◇ Financial Plans are prepared each year. These are reviewed and agreed by the Trustees.
- ◇ Induction is provided for new Trustees.
- ◇ Trustees attend formal training courses on the duties of Trustees.
- ◇ Trustees seek guidance and advice from their legal, investment and property advisors as required.

### **FINANCIAL**

Considers the financial capacity of the Charity and ensuring it has the available financial resources to continue to carry out its activities both now and in the years ahead. This incorporates the management of the operating (day-to-day) position, capital or building requirements and the returns earned on the Charity's investment portfolios.

#### ***Steps Taken to Mitigate Risk:***

- ◇ The appointment of an investment advisor who meets with the Trustees/Stewardship Group on a regular basis.
- ◇ The investment objectives are agreed and reviewed quarterly to consider prudence and liquidity criteria, regular and financial reporting against budget and cash flow planning.
- ◇ Investment reports are received and reviewed by the Trustees/Stewardship Group at the end of each quarter.
- ◇ Annual budgets are prepared for review and approval by Trustees. Budgets are reviewed on a quarterly basis and variances noted/explained at Stewardship Group Meetings.



## METHOD ADOPTED FOR APPOINTMENT AND INDUCTION OF NEW LEADERSHIP/TRUSTEES

Every six years, elected members of the Congregation meet at a Congregational Chapter (meeting) with the following objectives;

- ◆ To foster the Mercy charism in accordance with the objectives of the charity
- ◆ To give creative direction to the life and mission of the Congregation
- ◆ To elect a Congregational Leader and Team
- ◆ To reassess the Congregational resources

The most recent Chapter Meeting was held in July 2018 where the present Congregational Team was elected. The next Chapter Meeting will take place in 2024. The Congregational Leader and the Congregational Leadership Team are chosen for their personal qualities, their understanding and experience of the ministries of the Congregation.



The Congregational Leader exercises authority throughout the Congregation, in consultation with the Leadership Team. By virtue of the office they are the Trustees of the Charity. There is a period of induction when new Trustees are appointed - the outgoing Trustees handover all relevant information to the incoming Trustees over the space of a number of months. In addition the newly appointed Trustees undertake trustee training within the first year of taking on their roles. They are also given a full briefing of their responsibilities by the professional advisors to the Congregation.

It is the policy of the Congregational Leadership Team to work in collaboration with the six Provinces and Region, their lay colleagues, statutory and voluntary bodies, other religious congregations and organisations.

## REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS



### TRUSTEES (Congregational Leadership Team)

*Sr. Bernie Ryan, Sr. Helena O'Donoghue, Sr. Marie Louise White,  
Sr. Anna Burke, Sr. Cáit O'Dwyer. (left to right)*

**Charity Registered Number**      **20023843**

**CHY Number**                              **9527**

**Principal Office**                              **13/14 Moyle Park  
Convent Road  
Clondalkin  
Dublin 22  
D22 HR 94**

#### **Accounting Records**

The Trustees acknowledge their responsibilities under the Statement of Recorded Practice "Accounting by Charities" (SORP) and their obligations to keep proper books and records for the charity. The books of account of the charity are kept at 13/14 Moyle Park, Convent Road, Clondalkin, Dublin 22.

#### **Disclosure of information to Auditor**

Each of the persons who are Trustees at the time when this Trustees' report is approved has confirmed that: so far as that Trustee is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware, and that Trustee has taken all the steps that ought to have been taken as a Trustee in order to be aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

#### **Independent Auditor**

The independent auditor, RBK Business Advisers, has indicated their willingness to continue in office.

## REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

### Stewardship Group

***Sr. Marie Louise White, Congregational Leader***  
***Sr. Bernie Ryan, Leadership Team Member***  
***Ms. Karen Finan, Financial Administrator***  
***Sr. Anne Doyle, Congregational Treasurer***  
***L&P Trustees Services.***

### Independent Auditor

***RBK Business Advisers, Chartered Accountants  
and Statutory Audit Firm***  
Chartered Accountants & Registered Auditor  
Boole House, Beech Hill Office Campus, Beech Hill Road,  
Clonskeagh, Dublin 4, D04 A563.

### Bankers

***Allied Irish Banks plc***  
Stephen Court  
18-21 St Stephen's Green  
Dublin 2

***Bank of Ireland***  
28 Main Street  
Blackrock  
Co Dublin

### Solicitors

***Mason Hayes & Curran***  
South Bank House  
Barrow Street  
Dublin 4

### Financial Advisors

***L & P Trustee Services***

### Investment Advisors

***Cantor Fitzgerald Ireland***  
75 St. Stephen's Green  
Dublin 2  
D02 PR50

### Investment Managers

***Unigestion SA***  
***State Street Global Advisors Ltd***  
***Setanta Asset Management Ltd***