

CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, SOUTHERN PROVINCE

TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

Introduction

The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy is an international Roman Catholic Religious Congregation. The Congregation was founded by Catherine McAuley who was born into an 18th Century Dublin where there was a great divide between a privileged minority who held power and influence and the vast majority who lived in very poor conditions. 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 who were disadvantaged in society. From the beginning Catherine and her companions saw the necessity of providing basic education as a way of enabling people to improve their lives. They also recognized and responded to the need to improve healthcare in the city. In subsequent years the Sisters of Mercy focussed on providing education and healthcare. Consequently, schools and hospitals were established. Over the years other services were initiated.



Our Mission Today

In recent generations and as state provision in the areas of healthcare and education continued to improve, the work of the sisters became more varied. Motivated by the Christian vision of a world of equality, justice, peace and care of the earth there has been a consistent effort to respond to unmet needs, to work for justice and to advocate for the voiceless. Sisters are consciously committed to eco-justice, through raising awareness and through working with others, to restore people's relationship with the earth. Through this work we aim to redress the injustices affecting those most impoverished by the destruction of the earth's natural systems. Efforts to support access to education for children, young people and adults have continued. Sisters are involved in various facets of the healing ministry. Pioneering work has been done in the area of addressing addiction, the needs of refugees and asylum seekers and a sister was a founding member of MECPATHS (Mercy Efforts for Child Protection against Trafficking in the Hospitality and Services Sectors) a social justice response to the prevalence of human trafficking and the exploitation of people in Ireland. The numbers involved in pastoral care roles increased over the years. Many continue to be involved in promoting spirituality. Now, due to the age profile of the sisters the need to care for the aged and frail members has become a necessity.

Our Present Structure

In 1994, the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy (Ireland) was formed by the union of twenty-seven autonomous Mercy Congregations, formerly of Ireland and South Africa. The Congregation is currently comprised of seven Provinces – four in Ireland and three overseas in Kenya, South Africa and the United States. The purpose of this union of 1994 was to ensure greater effectiveness in the mission of Mercy. The Constitutions of the new Congregation were approved by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated life and Societies of Apostolic Life in 1995.

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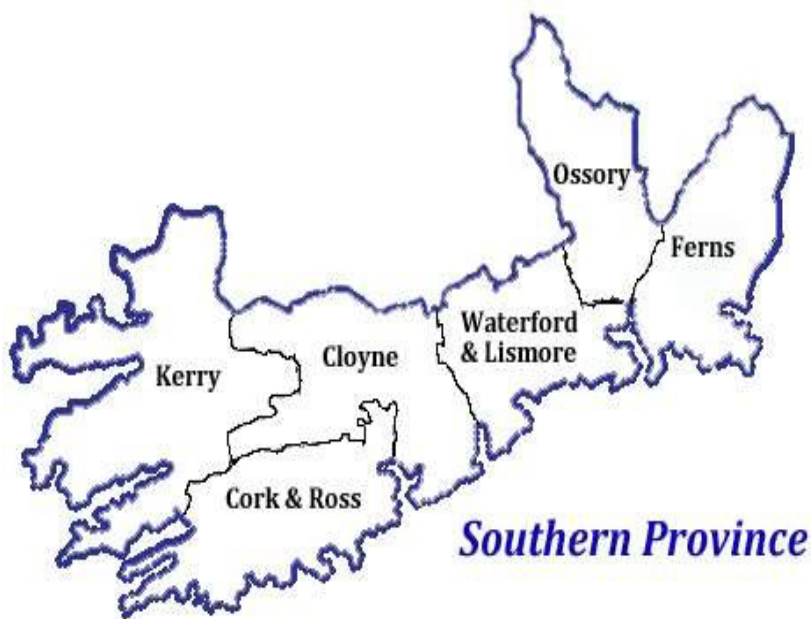
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Each Irish Province is recognised in civil law as an unincorporated association with its own Charity Number from the Irish Revenue Commissioners.

Southern Province

The Southern Province, which is one of four Mercy Provinces in Ireland, comprises five former independent congregations located in the Catholic Dioceses of Cloyne, Cork & Ross, Ferns, Kerry, Ossory and Waterford & Lismore. The geographical area comprises counties Carlow, Cork, Kerry, Kilkenny, Laois, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford. In addition, the Southern Province has a mission area in Peru.



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Membership at 31st December 2021 (Total Sisters 324)



Our Mercy 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, especially the poor and deprived.”

Constitutions 104 (1995)



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Objects of the Charity

The main objects of the Charity are:

- the advancement of religion
- the alleviation of poverty
- the support of those in need spiritually as well as materially

The charity aims to support the religious and other charitable works carried out in the name of the province and to care for the members of the province throughout their lives.

We do this through the activities and ministries of the Charity in the following areas:

- A. Congregational Living and the Advancement of Religion**
- B. Healthcare and the Pastoral Compassionate Care of the Sick and those in Need**
- C. Relief of Poverty, Promotion of Education, Justice and other Charitable Activities in Collaboration with and Support of other Groups**
- D. Heritage and Upkeep of Listed Buildings**
- E. Positive Impact Investment**

Public Benefit

Public Benefit is achieved in a variety of ways, as described throughout this report and is delivered through religious activities, impact investments, overseas aid, ecological awareness and a variety of services provided to families, refugees, older people, children, and to people experiencing hunger and poverty.

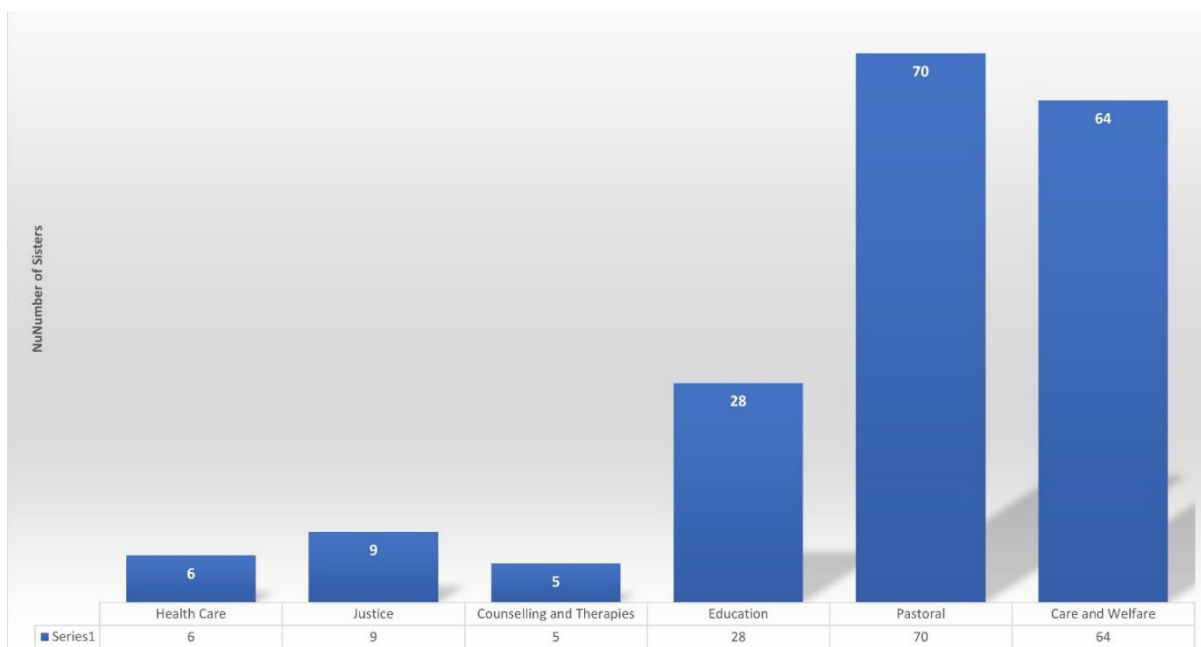
Through grant aids/donations the charity supports other charities to alleviate poverty and improve social conditions.

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Number of Sisters in Ministry



All members are committed to the advancement of religion, being a Christian Catholic community. The chart shows the areas in which active members are involved, some of them in more than one area. Most of these are part time roles. There are six sisters involved in internal administration: one is treasurer and five (trustees) exercise leadership responsibility within the province. Two sisters are members of the Congregational Leadership Team.

*Note - Any reference in this report to “Province” refers to the **Charity** of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province. Any reference in this report to “Sister” or “Sisters” refers to the members of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy Southern Province.*

A. Congregational Living and the Advancement of Religion

As the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province 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 better ways of carrying out this ministry in today’s world. The work in this area is mainly carried out through the local parishes where the members reside and actively participate and interact with the parish faith community. Through this living and praying the sisters support people in their needs and are committed to daily personal and communal prayer.

Sisters in receipt of salaries, stipends or pensions donate them to the Charity and therefore have no independent means of support. They have devoted all of their lives and their earnings to the furtherance of

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the Charity's objectives. Many also give their services free in their various ministries and continue to do so well beyond retirement age. The work of the Charity includes both the upkeep of the members and their upskilling so that they will be able to continue in their service to the public. The Trustees gave careful consideration to the age profile of the members of the province and the impact of this on the work of the Charity, property requirements and financial implications.

In this regard, the aims of the Trustees are summarised below. These aims continue to be applicable for the foreseeable future:

- Enabling sisters to continue and further the Mission of the Congregation particularly through prayer and offering opportunities for the development of a meaningful spirituality that is integrated with life's experience.
- Enabling sisters to carry out meaningful social and pastoral work based on the needs of the local community and their own expertise and skill.
- Enabling sisters to continue with their individual ministries for as long as possible.
- Providing the necessary support and resources for sisters actively engaged in ministry and ensuring adequate care and accommodation appropriate to the needs of ageing and frail members.
- Supporting Circle of Mercy members and others who undertake ministries that are consistent with the founding spirit of the Sisters of Mercy.

Review of Ministries/Activities 2021

From the end of December 2020 Ireland was placed under full level 5 of the Plan for Living with Covid 19. This in essence meant that everyone had to stay at home and all except essential services ceased. As in 2020, there was a huge reduction in the services the charity used to offer in pre Covid times. Sacramental ministry ceased, teaching moved back online and office staff worked from home. For sisters, as for everyone else zoom became an indispensable lifeline to the outside world. Meetings for various pastoral ministries e.g. Vincent de Paul, Boards of Management, bereavement counselling sessions were all conducted via Zoom. Sisters used their time and energy in various ways to minister to others, such as mask-making, making telephone calls, reading for the visually impaired, sending cards to people isolated e.g. prisoners and families of prisoners, the bereaved, people living on their own, patients in hospital and nursing homes and praying for all affected by the pandemic. They grieved the deaths of siblings and community members who had died of Covid -19 and of other illnesses during 2021.

Activities

The following are a few examples of ministries undertaken by the Charity in 2021.

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(a) Ballyhoura Rural Services



"There are no strangers here; only friends you haven't met." W.B. Yeats

Every Wednesday afternoon George and I chat for an hour. So far, we are both happy with our relationship as we have no problem sharing together about many interesting topics. Usually, we take a cup of tea together but apart as we speak to each other on the phone with no set agenda. With George, I have been brought into an interesting world of building, designing, reading and shooting and chats also took place around religion, politics, bog land, flora and fauna, chainsaw sculpture, poetry and much more. Some days he speaks of how he misses his wife who died two years before I met him. Listening is a big part of the role of a Ballyhoura befriender.

Our relationship is sponsored and monitored by Ballyhoura Rural Services, Churchtown, Co. Cork where over a few weeks I took part in their training to become a volunteer with their befriending service. Once a befriender and befriender are matched as I was with George, there was an introductory period of four weeks when our supervisor checked in with both of us each week in case the match was not the right one for either of us.

Befriending someone who is socially isolated can be really satisfying and can have a number of benefits for both befriender and befriender. Constant supervision is built into the role of the volunteers. Ballyhoura Volunteers work within the practices, procedures and ethos of the organisation. Ongoing training is also provided.

I find my volunteer befriending role a lifegiving experience with my befriender George because he has such a positive outlook on life. Although alone and in his eighties, he is so grateful for all the good things that life continues to offer him. There is little room for negativity in his life and I have been blessed to have been matched with such an interesting and lovely gentleman.

Ballyhoura Rural Services was established in 2010 to combat the growing challenge of isolation in all its forms - physical, social and emotional in the East Limerick and North Cork region. Volunteers can be involved in a Visitation Service or a Friendly Call Service. The Volunteer Project is a joint initiative between the HSE and the Ballyhoura Rural Services CLG.

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"Thousands of thanks and praise to His Holy Name" (Catherine McAuley) for this ministry of being with others described by Richard Rohr as 'a healing balm to the soul.'

(Dolores Brophy RSM)

"I want to thank you for connecting me with an exceptional person as a confidante, an angel with a sense of humour. It happened at a time in my life when I was low at the start of lockdown in 2020. (My wife had passed away a few months before.) I needed help and I didn't know it, but someone did. It is my pleasure to say how wonderful this service is"

(Beneficiary writing to the manager of Ballyhoura Rural Services)

(b) Covid Times in St. Mary's Secondary School Mallow

Ireland moved into a second full lockdown beginning on 11th of January 2021. In terms of schools and education I reflected on the experience this time as distinct from March 2020.

Back then we literally left school with one day's notice. There was no online training. We left with our laptops and books and did our best. 'Google classroom' was something we had heard about at one staff training afternoon where its merits were extolled and its possibilities were shown.

Alas, this was to change quickly and radically. Alone and unsure I set about setting up each class group online. I learned to send group emails and muddled my way through. The staff was wonderful and there was always somebody to WhatsApp or email when I was stuck.

Staff meetings of sixty plus were daunting: 'turn off your mic and type your question etc' was a far cry from being together in one room!

For the remainder of that school year, we worked solidly and the students were also trying to get used to this new but inadequate type of learning. At our pastoral care meetings, we worried about the significant number of students who weren't engaging due to device or internet connectivity. Unfortunately, many of these students came from disadvantaged backgrounds. As that school year came to an end we all hoped we had seen the end of online teaching and learning.



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Fast forward to the new year in January 2021: The news of the alarming increase in Covid cases was very worrying and it was clear that we had no choice but to have another lockdown.

Online teaching had become less of a challenge than in 2020. Now I was doing live Maths classes and Religious Education when possible. I had a new vocabulary in the line of technology - Motes, Hangouts, Google Meets, jam boards, scheduling classes and I definitely learned lots every day simply by trial and error. Staff wellbeing, as well as student wellbeing, were constantly to the fore.



To this end we had coffee mornings together usually on a Friday where you could drop in when you were free and meet a few online. As a year head I was responsible for the Leaving Certificate Applied classes and there was great engagement. It was lovely to chat with them and to let them know we cared. Twelve months into the pandemic students were well used to the technology and the school gave out over one hundred chrome books and laptops to those who would have had difficulty accessing a device for learning. This really helped with equality of opportunity.

The dawn of new hope came in April 2021 when we all returned to a much-changed environment where each student stayed in her base class and the teachers moved around.

Face masks were the norm. Hand sanitisers were everywhere. Our first years were allocated the four prefabs behind the theatre which effectively cut them off from the main school. I didn't have first years, but teachers bewailed the fact that they could only see two bright eyes looking out at them and really couldn't get to know them in their full youthful, vibrant beauty. This anonymity was further exacerbated when we had to return to online teaching. Our beloved Aemilian Theatre became two classrooms which meant no show, play, choir or drama for the foreseeable future. The room beside the staffroom became a second staffroom. New cafe like tables and chairs were bought which ensured social distancing was possible. Cleaning tables, chairs and bringing one's own utensils became the new way of being in the school community.

Thankfully all the hard work paid off and we got through April to June relatively unscathed.

Throughout this crisis and in my relating to the students I mourned their losses: the simple lunchtime gatherings, the concerts, choirs, graduations, debbs and the joy of being together when their final results came out. It was so unnatural and different for young people. Though we all found it difficult, as older adults we do not have the same milestones that they missed out on. Our years move swiftly as the Psalmist says and we have the wisdom of resilience and life experience. The next generation, I fear, will have lasting unresolved losses to contend with. We would do well to remember all the young people in our lives and be there for them when they need a listening ear or a word of encouragement.



(Anne Maria O'Carroll RSM)

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Circle of Mercy

Circles of Mercy meet in Charleville, Mallow, Blarney, Skibbereen and Clonakilty. Members come from local parish communities. They have a strong connection with Catherine McAuley and the Mercy Charism and express this in their daily lives. One or two sisters link with the groups in each area and in all there are about 40 members. In 2021, because of the pandemic, the Circles met online or remained in touch by phone.



In the Autumn of 2021, a new group called Encountering Mercy came into being (online) in response to Pope Francis invitation to create “a culture of encounter and a culture of mercy”. Meetings allow members to detach from the frenzy of modern hectic life and reflect on how they can be mercy and live mercy in their daily lives.

In Peru one sister facilitates a Catherine McAuley group. They study and share the story of Catherine and in 2021 they were involved in distributing food and clothes to needy families

Sacraments in a Time of Covid

Our preparation for the Sacraments in 2020 in the parish of St. Mary's, Kilkenny city, began in the usual way. Enrolment Ceremony for Confirmation followed by meetings with parents, Sacrament of Reconciliation for candidates, Ceremony of Light where parents symbolically handed on the flame of faith to their children and, finally, the Sacrament of Confirmation on February 29th. Then we turned our attention to First Penance and First Communion with dates already settled for May.

Then all changed - Covid 19, lockdown, home schooling and Zoom meetings became the norm. First Penance and Communion were rescheduled for the Autumn. October brought further cancellations. Classes were divided into smaller groups so that parents and siblings could be present and our final First Communion ceremony took place in December – five sleeps before Christmas!

Then we began to think about Confirmation 2021. The usual schedule of preparation was not possible. It was difficult to arrange meetings of parents or to visit classrooms. We all lived in hope that things would improve but eventually realised that whatever would happen it would be different. And then the proposal to celebrate the Sacrament in UPMC Nowlan Park was presented. The four city parishes combined resources, parents were consulted, Zoom meetings were held and on September 9th at 6.30pm all gathered in the park. One young man threw his hurley into the car in the hope that he might get a “puck around” before the ceremony began!

Bishop Denis Nulty, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin and Apostolic Administrator of Ossory, led the ceremony and together with the priests of the four parishes administered



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the Sacrament to over 300 candidates. The evening sun shone and there was a great sense of reverence and peace about the place. A different year, a different way of celebrating the Sacraments but the same Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Maybe we have been given an opportunity to reflect on how we celebrate the Sacraments and concentrate on what really matters.

(Maria Comerford, RSM)



B. Healthcare and the Compassionate Care of the Sick and Those in Need

The aims of the Trustees in 2021 are summarised as:

- To respond with care and compassion to issues of social injustice in collaboration with others.
- To ensure that the sisters receive the appropriate level of care they require. To this end management companies are employed by the charity.
- To maintain the properties used as community houses assessing their suitability for an ageing membership. Each community house has been reviewed and recommendations have been implemented. Assisted living for sisters is offered in the following locations: Killarney, Clonakilty, Charleville, Kinsale, Mallow, Cork City, Dungarvan, Carrick-on-Suir, Callan, Waterford and Wexford.

Catherine McAuley generated in her sisters a deep concern and compassionate care for the sick and dying. Today, over 180 years later, wellbeing activities, healthcare, care of the dying and the bereaved still engage many of the members of the Charity. They are involved in this work in community care and within the community houses. Sisters re-trained in chaplaincy and complementary therapies to work in a variety of settings to promote the wellbeing of people and contribute to the alleviation of stress in our society. A sister

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serves as a director on a hospital board, another serves as a director on the board of a nursing home and some are patient advocates in nursing homes. Sisters do not receive remuneration for this work.

The Trustees continue to ensure that the elderly sisters who are now themselves in need of care will receive the level of care they require. They have dedicated their lives to the furtherance of the Charity's objectives.

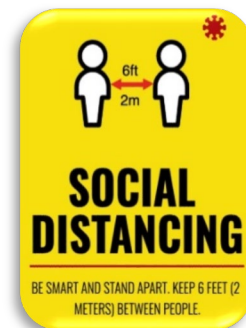
With the increasing age profile, the needs in this area have become more acute. It has meant adapting existing houses to become assisted living houses and, in some cases, new buildings have been required. It has also meant employing care staff to assist those in need and often having to get nursing home care for members



Care in Assisted Living Houses



2021 was another challenging year in the life of the Charity with the ongoing presence of Covid -19. The need to ensure the safety and welfare of our members became a major concern for trustees. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the management companies employed by us to care for our sisters. They ensured that our homes were safe places and everyone became very aware of the need to comply with the HSE and Government Guidelines.



A Cheerful Smile, a Knowing Wink and a Gentle Touch

“There are three things the poor prize more highly than gold, tho’ they cost the donor nothing; among these are the kind word, the gentle, compassionate look and the patient hearing of their sorrows”. Catherine McAuley

Visitation was a priority for our foundress Catherine McAuley. Conscious of that reality we always held the ministry of visitation as a necessary and important part of our role as Sisters of Mercy. As primary school teachers, we were keenly aware of the value of visiting the homes of our students. This gave us a fuller understanding of each student's family circumstances, thus enabling us to have an awareness of the needs of the whole child as well as their academic needs. As members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society back in the 1980's, we continued to experience the value of home visitation. Visiting the homes allowed us to

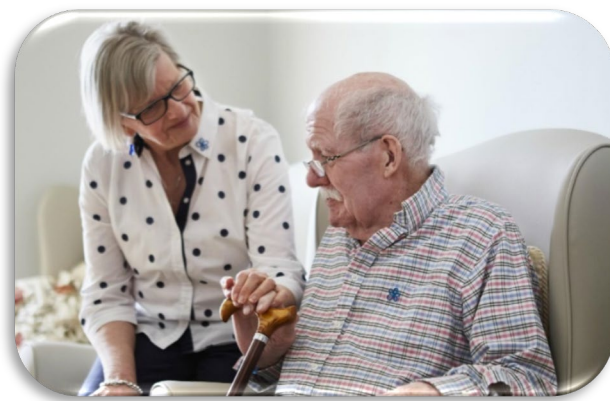
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be present to the person and see beyond the material requests and very often taught us that “*presence*” was more important than “*present/gift*”. During a period of family ministry, when in a caring role, we experienced first-hand the real value of a visit to the home. Not only did visits bring joy to the one being cared for but it was a wonderful support to the carer - a little oasis in what might often be a lonely place.

Having retired from formal ministry and in our suitable circumstances we saw the opportunity to reach out and share our time with the people in our parish. Hence, we started visiting nursing homes, hospitals and parishioners in their own homes. We also made a conscious decision to visit the members of our communities in our cluster. At this point we could honestly say that we found this to be a most rewarding, fulfilling, life-giving experience - maybe even more so for us than those we visited.



Through visitation we have had the privilege of meeting and connecting with people where they are at in life. We share their dreams, hopes, concerns, joys and sorrows. Through our presence we support them in the difficult times never missing an opportunity to enhance our encounters with humour, a song, hymns, a prayer and a good “*belly-laugh*”.

COVID-19 prevented us from physically visiting so we took refuge in the pen, the phone, WhatsApp and prayer “*from a distance*”. Visiting is two-way. In every encounter we realise how much people appreciate and value our presence. Taking the time to sit at the “*hearth*” of one's abode and listen attentively to the pains, joys, anxieties of another's heart has brought us to our knees on many occasions. It has kept us fine-tuned to the many difficulties people face in their own realities and our support and concern for them has become a reality for us in our prayer. We continue to be amazed at how little acts of kindness bring such joy even to the darkest moments.

Our encounters very often reflect the bible story of The Visitation - Mary greeting Elizabeth and sharing the joy of “*presence*” with and in each other. Sometimes when meeting vulnerability in the other it feels like a “*real presence*” experience - a Eucharistic moment. We are forever mindful of these precious moments which we reflect upon with deep gratitude. No doubt there have been less positive encounters and they present their own challenge - to always listen with the ears of the heart. There have been times, when looking, we failed to see - when listening, we failed to hear. We can never underestimate the real value and comfort of a cheerful smile, a knowing wink and a gentle touch.

(Mary Freeman RSM & Mary Kenny RSM)

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Bethany Bereavement Support – A Personal Experience

"A terrible tragedy happened in our family a few short years ago. Our daughter went missing and was found murdered some days later. With no chance of seeing her or saying goodbye, we were plunged into the depths of despair which was a very dark place to be.



A few weeks later, I was informed of a voluntary bereavement support group in Mallow called the Bethany Bereavement Support. These people are trained in listening rather than counselling which I found very important. I went to meet a man and a woman who were two volunteers with Bethany. I went for many, many sessions to these two wonderful people who worked together. By listening, they gave me the opportunity to verbalise all my thoughts and fears while trying to process them. Now and then, a word of support and hope with a gentle nudge forward would come my way. We would light a candle and invite the Holy Spirit to be with us each time we met.

In times of despair, the road ahead can seem very obscure, the boat rocking violently. Over time, through Bethany the boat became more stable and the road somewhat clearer. For me Bethany became a lifeline from the depths of darkness and despair up to the light and the beauty of life. Bethany provided tools to cope with the terrible tragedy and hopefully with the help of the Holy Spirit to realise my true purpose in life.

I will be eternally grateful for all the love, support and kindness I received from those two special people. We have become lifelong friends".

(Name withheld for reasons of confidentiality)

"For me Bethany became a lifeline from the depths of darkness and despair....."

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Hospital Chaplaincy

Formal hospital chaplaincy ministry has found expression in recent years, having developed from the many ways sisters worked in both private and public hospitals. As professional qualifications were required some sisters availed of theological, psychological and pastoral related training to be accredited for this role. As a Mercy Sister in the Southern Province, I was employed full time in the role of Hospital Chaplain at Bons Secours Hospital, Cork from 2009 to 2020 and continue now in a part time capacity.



Bons Secours Hospital, Cork

The ministry of hospital chaplaincy is an important aspect of the healing ministry of the church based on the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth who went about healing the sick, the deaf, the blind, those with leprosy and he also raised people from the dead.

Today, the chaplain holds a specialised role as a member of the multidisciplinary team of the hospital in caring for the patient and in turn ministering to the needs of all involved with the patient e.g. hospital staff and family members. All experience deep grief and suffering. The pastoral relationship is central to healthcare chaplaincy, that is “being with” the patient, being fully present to staff and family at times of greatest vulnerability. This requires patient listening and deep empathy at all times.

The chaplain's role changed significantly from 2019-2021 due to Covid-19. No visitors were allowed into hospitals except for end-of-life patients. Chaplains underwent temperature checks, dressed in scrubs, gowned, masked and befriended patients at their most vulnerable time. We met with families and accompanied them in their time of great pain, trauma and complicated grief. No one could touch to welcome or sympathise with them and sometimes they did not mix as family due to being immunocompromised.

Other aspects of the ministry included using the iPad and Facetime to allow family members to be with their parents or relatives at the hour of death. These means also helped patients, who were able, to connect with their parishes and funerals of family and friends. We stayed with the patient at such times to comfort them. These technological supports were really important in assisting families from overseas who could not travel. I remember setting up a zoom call with a translator, consultant and the family of a man who was on a ventilator.



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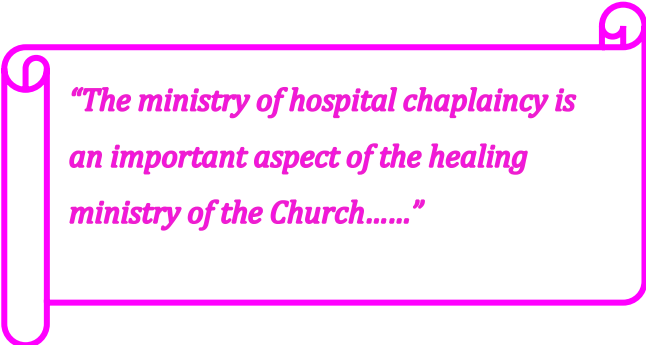
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As a chaplaincy team we prayed Morning and Evening Prayer and Mid-day Reflection from the Chapel throughout the pandemic and these were relayed on the hospital TV. This was a support since Mass could not be celebrated. It offered 'soul food' and nourishment to patients at a time of fear, sadness and loss. Tele-Chaplaincy arose from this time to connect with oncology and chronically ill patients when they were not allowed come to the hospital for fear of contracting the virus. It offered us, as chaplains, a new creative approach to the role. This is continuing as a support for carers who are isolated and alone.

Hospital chaplaincy continues the legacy of care much beloved by Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, who said:

"May He look on us with love and pity and then we shall be able to do anything He wishes us to do, no matter how difficult to accomplish or painful to our feeling."

(Margaret O'Keeffe RSM)



"The ministry of hospital chaplaincy is an important aspect of the healing ministry of the Church....."

C. Alleviation of Poverty, Promotion of Education, Justice and other Charitable Activities in Collaboration with and Support of other Groups

"Our foundress, Catherine McAuley, generated in her sisters a deep concern for those at risk in society – this concern engages us in Christian Education. It urges us to be with, and for, the poor and distressed, working for social justice and well-being, seeking to bring rich and poor together in mutual love and service" *Mercy Constitutions 43 (1985)*

The Sisters of Mercy aim to honour that commitment to the best of their ability. In 2021 118 sisters engaged in the Charity's commitment to the relief of poverty, promotion of education, justice and other charitable activities through ministries related to the following: The activities in this area are grouped under the following headings:

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1. Promotion of education
2. Justice, peace and reconciliation
3. Overseas development and support
4. Pastoral and social care and development

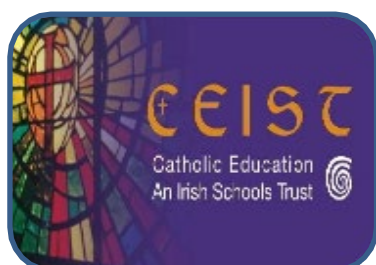
1. Promotion of Education

Provision of education and access to education has been central to the work of the Charity. Wherever new Mercy foundations were established, a first priority of the sisters was to make education available, especially to the children of those who were poor. The provision of formal education was a major ministry of the Charity for over one hundred and seventy years. Through education the sisters committed themselves to the development of the whole child - spiritually, physically, emotionally and academically. Special care and attention was given to children who were economically and environmentally stressed or deprived. The Mercy Schools were continually updated according to the emerging needs of the society and were institutions of creativity, innovation and academic excellence.

From the late 19th century onwards the Mercy Sisters established second-level schools, including boarding schools, in most provincial towns thereby enabling children from rural Ireland to receive an education.

Discernment regarding the rationalisation of religious run schools began in the 1970's and gained momentum in the 1980's and 1990's. In recent years there have been major developments in the landscape of the Charity's involvement in schools, and this is reflected in the gradual transfer of responsibility for the future of Catholic education in Mercy Schools to other trusteeships.

**(i) Voluntary and Secondary School Trusteeship:
Catholic Education: an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST)**



CEIST was set up in 2007 by five Congregations, one of which was the Sisters of Mercy. It is an organizational framework for exercising trusteeship of second level schools. In its mission focus CEIST seeks to offer holistic education out of a vision for human wellbeing and to contribute to the creation of a just and compassionate society, inspired by the Christian Gospels. CEIST works to ensure that each school is a centre of excellence and that there is a vibrant networking of schools so that education in the Catholic tradition remains a viable option in a pluralist society.

CEIST exercises the Trustee Responsibilities formerly held by the five Religious Congregations and supports the good governance of the 107 schools in the Trust. CEIST also enjoys a co-patronage agency agreement

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with 32 community schools and designated community colleges engaging regularly with the ETBs, dioceses and other Trust bodies.

Again in 2021 the predominant force for schools was Covid – 19. The year began with the Delta surge and the decision that schools would not open until after Christmas. Zoom, Teams and other platforms once again became part of the everyday routine. This was followed by a 'blended' period when schools had to adapt to in person education for some and remote for others. Schools re-opened on 1st March and were faced with the Accredited Grades System and all it involved. All breathed a sigh of relief when some respite came on 9th June. However, September brought a lot of uncertainty and fear and as the term progressed masks, social-distancing and sanitising were part of everyday life.

- In October 2021 thirty-one Boards of Management commenced a three-year term.
- A gathering for new and existing members of Boards of Management was held in November 2021.
- A group of CEIST teachers came together with Kate Liffey to explore ethos within their school. For Phase 1 a questionnaire was designed to use with students, parents/guardians and staff.
- *The Spiral Programme* sought to bring CEIST principals and Deputy Principals on a spiritual journey. In involved interaction with leading thinkers in the areas of theology, education, spirituality, sociology and ecology.
- Principals and Deputy Principal were offered an information session on Child Protection- with particular emphasis on *Department of Education Child Protection Inspections*.
- All support and ancillary staff were offered an information session on their role in child protection.
- *Transforming Meetings* is a programme for School Principals and Deputies to get the very best thinking, action and results at meetings in schools.
- In the Spring and Autumn of 2021 over 400 teachers from CEIST schools completed the *CEIST Middle Leadership Programme*. Leadership as service was a key theme and the five CEIST values were explored.
- An online Induction Seminar "*Welcome to the CEIST Family*" took place online for all new teachers.
- A number of Leadership Gatherings (Senior Leaders and Chairpersons) were held throughout the year.
- Two gatherings for religion teachers took place with 118 RE teachers participating.



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- Two gatherings for support staff (secretaries, caretakers, cleaners, nurses, librarians etc.) were also held in 2021.
- Due to Covid – 19 the Annual National Student Gathering was cancelled but an online Student Gathering was organised instead.

(ii) EDUCENA (Education Enabled)

The Educena Foundation works with the CEIST Trust to enable the resourcing of trusteeship of Catholic post primary education in Ireland, managing and optimising the financial resources that will be needed into the future. To date ten properties have been transferred by the Sisters of Mercy Southern Province to the Educena Foundation – six remain to be transferred. The task of transferring the schools involves considerable work on the part of the Charity's trustees and their legal and property advisers.



Mercy Secondary School, Waterford



St. Mary's Secondary School, Mallow

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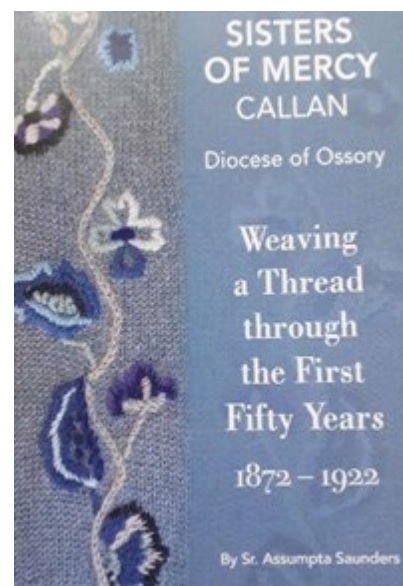


Mount Mercy College, Cork

An important contribution to the history of education in 2021 was the publication by Sr, Assumpta Saunders (Callan) of her book *Sisters of Mercy, Callan, Diocese of Ossory. Weaving a Thread through the First Fifty Years.*

Callan in 1872 was not a happy place. A bitter schism had arisen in the town due to a dispute between the parish priest and the ecclesiastical authorities. The people of the town had taken sides and there were many violent clashes in the streets. Into this chaos stepped six Sisters of Mercy from Athy, at the request of Bishop Patrick Moran who himself was appointed Bishop of Ossory during the schism.

Assumpta's book takes us through the first fifty years of the sisters in Ossory, the early struggles, setting up schools, toiling in the workhouses in Callan and Kilkenny, sending new shoots to Thomastown and Ballyragget and, in 1888, to Paramatta, Sydney. There was sadness, too, the death of the founding sisters and of many younger sisters. The Sisters of Mercy came to Borris-in-Ossory in 1873 through a different route and the two groups amalgamated in 1985.



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(iii) Community Schools

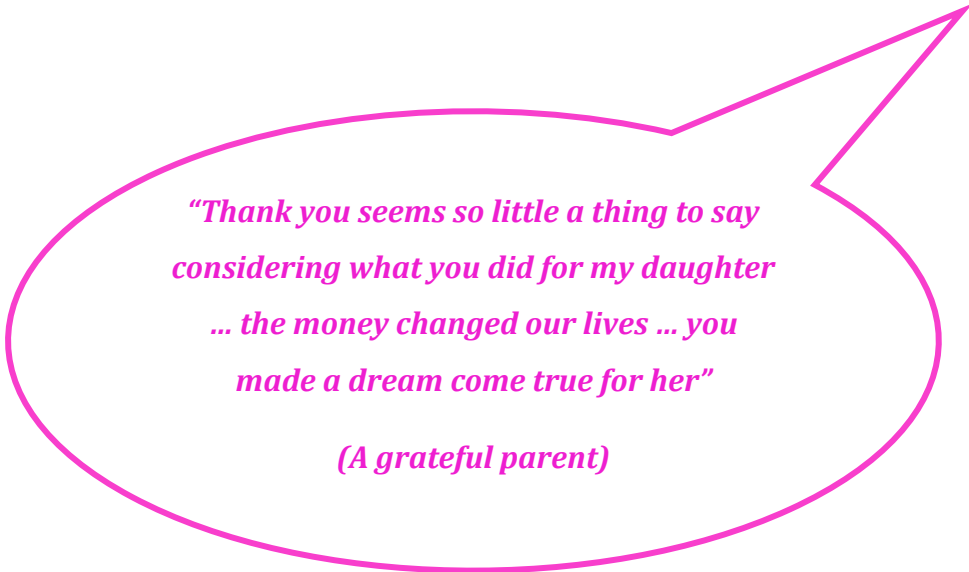
In 2018 the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy and The Presentation Sisters engaged CEIST to carry out the Trustee function in Community Schools and Designated Community Colleges under an Agency Agreement. This legal Agency Agreement commits CEIST to carrying out the 'Active Trusteeship' of the Mercy and Presentation Sisters in schools where they are co-Trustees. The agency agreement was signed and extended for a further three years in October 2021.

The Charity is Joint Trustee of five Community Schools and one Community College - Kinsale, Beara, Blackwater, Skibbereen, Passage West Community Schools and Coláiste Dún Iascaigh Community College, Cahir. In 2021 the Charity contributed €6,514.65 towards the salary of the person appointed by CEIST as the Community Schools and Colleges Co-ordinator.

(iv) Eliza Dennehy Fund

The fund was set up in 1963 when the Sisters of Mercy, Macroom were left \$125,000 by Mary Cronin for, as the will quotes, "the establishment of a fund to be known as the Mary Eliza Dennehy Memorial Fund. Mary Eliza Dennehy was the grandmother of the donor. This Memorial Fund shall be applied as the governing board of the convent of the Sisters of Mercy may determine for charitable and educational purposes, the students of the said convent to have the privilege of advancing their education by scholarships or otherwise in higher schools of learning in Ireland and in the continent of Europe."

Over the years the money was invested by the sisters. Since the Convent of Mercy, Macroom closed this fund is administered by the Charity. In 2021 €62,600 was disbursed from the fund.



*"Thank you seems so little a thing to say
considering what you did for my daughter
... the money changed our lives ... you
made a dream come true for her"*

(A grateful parent)

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(v) Primary Schools

The trusteeship of the enterprise of education has been transferred to the relevant Dioceses and the trusteeship of the property is in the process of being transferred. To date 8 have been transferred and 9 remain to be transferred. The Sisters of Mercy retain Trusteeship in St Maries of the Isle, Primary School, Cork City. Enrolment and staffing have increased dramatically and there are now four classes for children with Autism ASD. The school population is multi-cultural and welcoming of all. It has pupils from all across the world but mostly India and Poland. Covid -19 continued to present

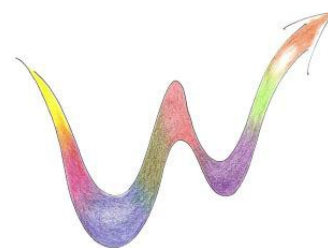


challenges including staff shortages, staff absences and much reduced pupil attendance but the children, parents and staff adapted well. Hand sanitising, mask wearing and keeping a safe social distance became a routine part of the school day. New drop off and collection procedures worked well. Remote teaching and learning became familiar to all.

In 2021 St. Catherine's Primary School, Cork City was transferred to the Diocese of Cork and Ross.

(vi) Welcome Immigrant Centre Ltd T/A Welcome English

"Welcome English is committed to meeting the English Language needs of refugees, those seeking asylum and unemployed immigrants in Cork and its surrounds"
(Mission Statement)



Welcome English Centre in Cork City was set up by the province in the year 2000 to respond to the growing numbers of asylum seekers and those with refugee status and their need to learn English. It was set up and coordinated by one of the sisters when she retired from teaching at post primary level. Priority is given to asylum seekers on the courses.

Welcome Immigrant Centre Company Limited by Guarantee is a charity and is largely reliant on donations for funding the operating costs and is principally staffed by a team of volunteer tutors and supported by a fulltime administrator employed directly by the company. The principal donors are the Sisters of Mercy who provided a cash donation of €50,000 in 2021 and a contribution of €20,000 for refurbishment. In addition to this funding, the congregation also provides the premises where the services are provided, together with the services of other support staff.



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Most tutoring staff provide their services on a voluntary basis. These volunteers are supplemented by tutors that are placed by the Cork Education and Training Board (CETB). The CETB employs and pays these individuals directly and makes them available to the centre for tutoring. Without the continuing support of all donors and volunteers the centre would not be able to continue to provide its services.

Students come from many countries (see table below) and can be classified as being asylum seekers, refugees, those in family unification/leave to remain systems and other unemployed or low paid immigrants. Many of these students live within the Direct Provision system and a large percentage of these have very low literacy levels and one-to-one tuition is required to bring them up to the point where they can be integrated into normal classes

The Covid pandemic and its related restrictions continued to impact significantly on the operations of Welcome English throughout 2021. Classes were held online from January through to May and the easing of restrictions then allowed in-person classes to resume and these continued until the end of the summer term in June. To comply with the health and safety guidelines, numbers attending were restricted to approximately 70 for the morning classes and 20 for the afternoon classes.

During the time of the centre closure contact was still kept with the most vulnerable students. Many of them did not have access to computers or the literacy skills to take part in Zoom classes so a weekly call was made to check in on how they were doing.

Number of Students and Countries of Origin 31st December 2021

Country	No. of Students	Country	No. of Students
Afghanistan	7	Nepal	1
Algeria	1	Palestine	2
Brazil	4	Pakistan	4
China	1	Peru	1
Congo DR	8	Poland	5
Cuba	1	Portugal	1
Ecuador	1	Romania	1
Egypt	2	Russia	1
El Salvador	2	Slovakia	1
Eritrea	3	Somalia	6
Iran	4	Sudan	6
Kurdistan	2	Syria	15
Lebanon	1	Turkey	3
Lithuania	2	Ukraine	1
Mexico	1	Venezuela	1
		Vietnam	1

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Summary	
European Union	14 Students
Family Reunification	32 Students
Refugees	12 Students
Immigrants	11 Students
Asylum Seekers	21 Students



In 2021 Cork *Lifelong Learning*, CETB named Welcome English on the Roll of Honour for Adult Community Education in Cork. This is a testament to the Welcome English Centre and all involved.

Angela Murphy, Manager of Welcome English also received an award from the Cork South City Volunteer Centre for 2021.

She was nominated for the award by members of the Welcome English community for the dignity and respect shown to everyone that comes to the centre seeking help.



2. Justice, Peace and Reconciliation

The Charity Governing Document urges sisters *“to be with and for the poor and distressed, working for social justice and wellbeing, seeking to bring rich and poor together in mutual love and service”* Constitutions 43 (1985).

The Charity is committed to raising awareness of the interdependence and interconnectedness of all of life. It aims to promote right relationships with all people and with all of life. Over the years, members of the province have endeavoured to alleviate suffering in all its forms. These members worked in schools, workhouses, orphanages and hospitals in co-operation with the Church and State. The works of the sisters today for justice, peace and reconciliation include:

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- Mercy International Association
- Care of Creation/Ecology
- MECPATHS (Mercy Efforts for Child Protection against Trafficking within the Hospitality and Services Sector)
- Solidarity with and Support for Former Residents of Mercy Managed Institutions

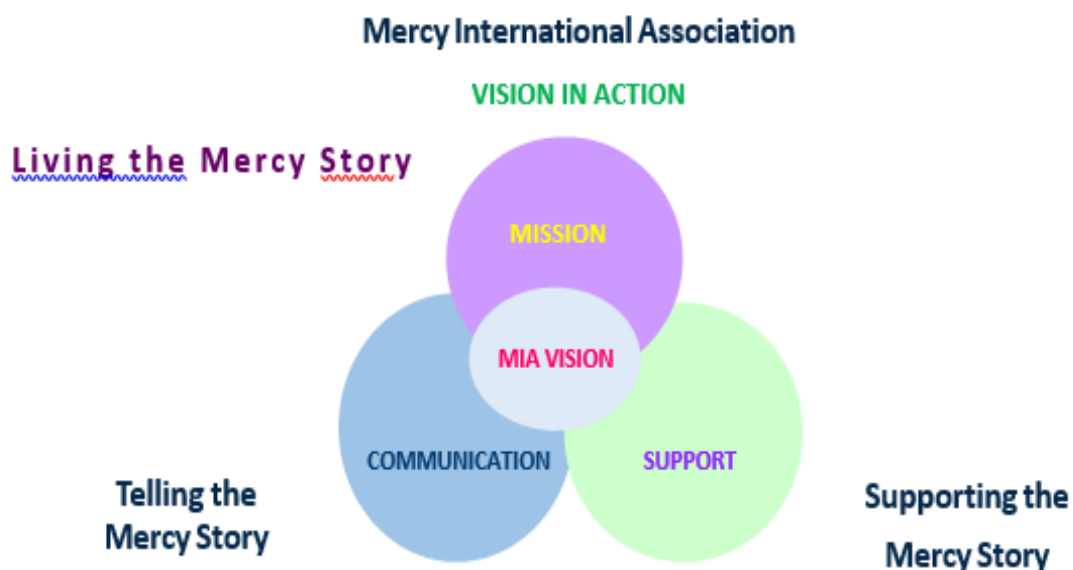
(i) **Mercy International Association**

Mercy International Association is an association of the leaders of the Mercy Congregations, Institutes and Unions throughout the world

The Congregations are in Ireland, England, America, Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland and the Philippines.



Each Mercy group contributes financially and with personnel to the overall global effort to communicate the vision of Catherine McAuley and to put it into action.



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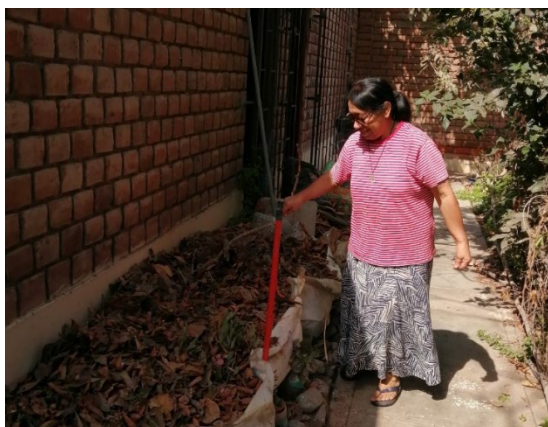
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During the different Covid – 19 lockdowns many of the members of the Charity connected in a new way with nature through time for reflecting on the beauty of our world, walks, gardening, reading and watching nature programmes on T.V.

First-ever Earth Hour 'Virtual Spotlight' – 27 March 2021

2021 was a special year for Earth Hour. Over the years, the lights-off moment saw entire streets, buildings, landmarks, and city skylines go dark – an unmissable sight that drew public attention to nature loss and the climate crisis. In 2021 – amidst the global circumstances - Earth Hour invited all to raise awareness and create the same unmissable sight online, so that the world sees our planet, the issues we face, and our place within it, in a new light. On the night of Earth Hour, they posted a must-watch video on all their social media pages. The goal was simple: put the spotlight on our planet and make it the most watched video in the world on March 27 (or beyond!) so that as many people as possible hear the message!



Peru: There is a substantial commitment to ecology by our members in Peru, especially in the schools. One member has a team who voluntarily set plants in their local areas. She also provides training on the care of our earth and the use of its resources and organises different scientific projects on ecology.

← Using a method of growing plants that saves water and maintains humidity and nitrogen for the care of Our Common Home

Interconnectedness Group

The Interconnectedness Group in the Southern Province was formed after the Provincial Chapter of 2001 “to nurture an awareness of the whole community of life and our place within it” and to implement the recommendations

- that we invite and encourage each other to grow in our understanding of cosmology and ecology and to engage the theological/spiritual issues involved.
- that our growing awareness of the ‘interconnectedness of life’ be expressed in practical ways.

Since 2001, the group has had regular meetings to educate, inform & form ourselves through rituals, inputs, videos, books, sharing, retreats, workshops & outings e.g. visits to ecological sites, reflections on Laudato Si, and more recently by engaging with the MIRP & MGP processes.

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In 2021 in accordance with HSE and government Covid-19 guidelines the group kept in touch through emails and phone calls. They also circulated material for reading and reflection. Meetings to celebrate rituals for the feast of St. Brigid, the Spring Equinox and Bealtaine were held via Zoom and technology facilitated some communities of sisters to join in.

(iii) **MECPATHS** is dedicated to countering Child Trafficking and is the only such project in Ireland.



It was officially recognised by the Department of Justice in 2020 when MECPATHS was accepted as an official education partner of the department in countering human trafficking.

MECPATHS also collaborates with many organisations working to counter other forms of trafficking in Ireland.

2021 was another busy year for MECPATHS. World Day Against Trafficking in Persons is marked each year on July 30th. During the weeks leading up to this date a number of letters and articles submitted by MECPATHS to highlight the issue of child trafficking in the Irish context were published in national papers including The Irish Examiner, The Irish Catholic, The Sun and Hospitality Ireland.

JP and Ann, the MECPATHS staff both did live interviews on July 30th and August 4th respectively.

To mark World Day Against Trafficking in Person 2021, MECPATHS in partnership with the Department of Justice launched an online e-learning module for all Hotel Management and staff. Similar online training was developed for the Private Security Authority and Aviation Industry.

Networking and collaboration are two values central to the MECPATHS project. To mark World Day Against Trafficking in Persons 2021, MECPATHS also organised a gathering of representatives of many of the key organisations working to highlight the issue of human trafficking in Ireland. Representatives from MECPATHS, The Immigrant Council of Ireland, The Migrants Rights Centre Ireland, Ruhama, Act to Prevent Trafficking, Maynooth University, Akidwa and The International Organisation for Migration attended. The Anti-Trafficking Community in Ireland continued to raise awareness and their concerns about the placement of Ireland on a Tier 2 Watch-list by The US State Department which categorises Ireland as 'the worst country in Western Europe' in relation to Anti Human Trafficking responsiveness.

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MECPATHS received two industry selected Awards during the summer months, namely:

- 1) The Corporate LiveWire Award for Social Justice and Innovation
- 2) The 2021 LuxLife Hospitality Award for Social Innovation.



“To move successfully from nominee to winner, there must be evidence of extensive expertise and skills, dedication to customer service and client satisfaction with an ongoing commitment to excellence and innovation”. (Steven Simpson, Lux Life Awards Manager)

In the lead up to Mercy Day, MECPATHS was invited by Mercy International Association to take part in ‘Opening Doors to an Emerging Future’, an online programme whose aim is to connect the Mercy Global Community and explore possibilities for the future. JP O’Sullivan (Networks & Communications Manager) gave an excellent presentation on the work of MECPATHS. In the small groups conversations, the project was recognised and valued as being the only project highlighting the issue of child trafficking in the Republic of Ireland. Sisters and co-workers worldwide were inspired and heartened to hear of this cutting - edge ministry.

Our Congregational Chapter call 2018 states ‘*Conscious of the diversity and interdependence of all life we join with others in responding with compassion to critical issues of injustice.*’

The issue of Child Trafficking without doubt is one of the most horrendous crimes in our world today.



(iv) AMRI (Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland)

The Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI) represents and promotes active collaboration between Religious Congregations, Societies of Apostolic Life and Lay Missionary Groups. It seeks to respond to existing and emerging realities both in Ireland and overseas by supporting and energising the life and ministries of its members and of the wider church with a renewed sense of hope and relevance.



AMRI is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. It is funded by the contributions of the member organisations and overall responsibility rests with an executive council which is elected by the members.

The Aims of AMRI are:

- Gospel Leadership – high standards of governance and leadership

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- Mission and Dialogue – open to new models of mission and inter-religious dialogue
- Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation – awareness raising, action for justice and sustainable living
- Health, Wellbeing and Wholeness – fostering pastoral responses in areas of need

AMRI promotes the common interests of the member organisations and supports their leaders in responding to the challenges of the time.

In response to Covid – 19 a working group and a helpline were set up to offer accurate information and advice. AMRI liaised with public health authorities to secure an early rollout of vaccines for at risk older religious in congregated settings.

Some of AMRI's areas of work in 2021:

- ✚ **Communications:** The communications group is seeking advice on how we might best add our voices to the public narrative about religious life which dominates our media today so that the good news story of who we are and what we do, both yesterday and today, is also told more loudly and clearly. They have also revamped their website and produced a new e-newsletter.
- ✚ **Research and Policy:** Submissions and statements were published on, for example, the Dying with Dignity Bill 2020, the translation of the new Lectionary, the Synodal Pathway and the Mother and Baby Homes Reports. Research has also been commissioned on the experience of returned missionaries.
- ✚ **Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation:** In it's work AMRI has encouraged divestment and ethical investing, promoting the Global Catholic Climate Campaign now known as the Laudato Si' Movement.

AMRI continues to raise awareness and lobby against human trafficking through Action to Prevent Human Trafficking (APT). Due to Covid the work for 2020 only came to fruition in 2021.



- ✚ **Vocations Ireland:** In July 2021 Vocations Ireland joined AMRI. Workshops were organised, there was a presence at COP 26 and work continued on the 'revisoning of the role of brotherhood today'. Regional groups were also developed.



- ✚ **Education:** An Education Committee was established to support the work of the Education Coordinator and to strengthen collaboration in this field. It also has a particular focus on educational disadvantage and representation on various Catholic Education bodies.
- ✚ **Religious Formation Ministry Programme:** Due to lockdown the programme was not run for 2020/21 but began in October for 2021/22
- ✚ **Lay Mission:** The Lay Mission Committee continued to work in ensuring stronger collaboration of religious and lay missionaries. A webinar was organised to begin a process of engaging with laypeople in relation to the Synodal Pathway.

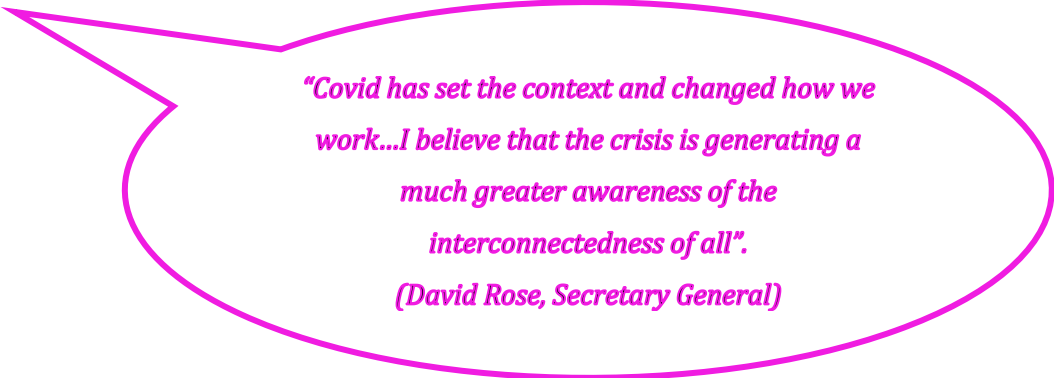
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- ✚ **Garda Vetting:** Garda vetting is provided for 65 congregations and in 2021 almost 600 accessed the service.
- ✚ **Minister of Religious Visas:** Work to obtain these visas is ongoing.
- ✚ **Healthcare:** AMRI contributes to the Bishops Healthcare Office in Maynooth in which a member of the Charity works.
- ✚ **Shared Archive for Religious:** AMRI initiated a conversation with the President of Maynooth University to explore the possibility of a shared central archive for congregations.
- ✚ **Safeguarding, Healing and Peace:** In 2021 a lot of work was put into planning an Independent Strategic Review of Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Ireland. Work was also begun on a shared response to the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults. During 2021, matters relating to Towards Healing continued to take up much of AMRI's agenda.

The Charity contributed €16,700 to AMRI in 2021.



*"Covid has set the context and changed how we work...I believe that the crisis is generating a much greater awareness of the interconnectedness of all".
(David Rose, Secretary General)*

3. Overseas Development and Support

"Belonging to the Universal Church, missionary in her very nature, we seek to incarnate the mercy of God, according to the limits of our resources, in missionary countries." (Mercy Constitutions, Par 45)

The Charity supports, through its human, financial and other resources, all charitable works carried out in the name of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy. This objective, rooted in the priority outreach of the Congregation to the poor and marginalized of society, is given lived expression in its financial sponsorship of numerous and ever - increasing charitable activities. These activities have a global geographic spread including assistance to local, national and international needs. In 2021 the Charity provided living costs for the members in Peru and monies received as restricted donations were transferred.

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Peru:

Peru has eight members working in the country, six are Peruvian and two are Irish. One member lives and ministers in Maché, in the Andes. One member lives and ministers in Lima and six members live in Trujillo. The sisters in Peru work in six areas:

Education: Formal State Education and Projects - operating and maintaining two libraries in extremely poor areas. They also facilitate the education of children with special needs in special schools. A sister works in a Technical Centre which engages in the formation and on-going training of adult women and men and young people, offering a variety of skills. Three sisters are secondary school teachers.



Social Services - supporting people in prison, in the Mercy Free Legal Aid office and in childcare centres.

Two of the sisters co-ordinate pastoral ministry in parishes: one in the Sierra (Mountains) and one in Trujillo.



Trujillo

- **Justice** - providing a free legal aid service—obtaining birth certificates and ID documentation to assist people accessing social support schemes. The free legal aid enables people to receive fair sentences.
- **Health Services** - providing food and medicine for emergency cases and the provision of a Residential Addiction Treatment Centre. This centre (Sal Y Luz) is staffed and run by one sister and counsellors.
- **Care of Creation** - there is a substantial commitment to ecology in Maché and in the schools in Trujillo.



Sal Y Luz, Addiction Treatment Centre

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Resources for all these projects come from the Congregation Solidarity Fund, Southern Province and from The Ministry of the Good Shepherds, Boca Raton Florida, as well as donations from individual sisters and their families.

India:

In 2021 €7,500.00 was donated to the Hope Foundation.

In addition to the help and support provided by the Trustees communities in the province continue to help this and other missions.

Other Mission Areas – The province provides ongoing human and financial support in the cause of justice, for the development and enrichment of people's lives in other regions of the world also. This support is usually given through donations for works/projects which have given life and hope to many people.

INDIA
€7,500

DONATIONS

2021

UNICEF
(For Covid vaccines)
€5,000

TRÓCAIRE
(Afghanistan)
€5,000

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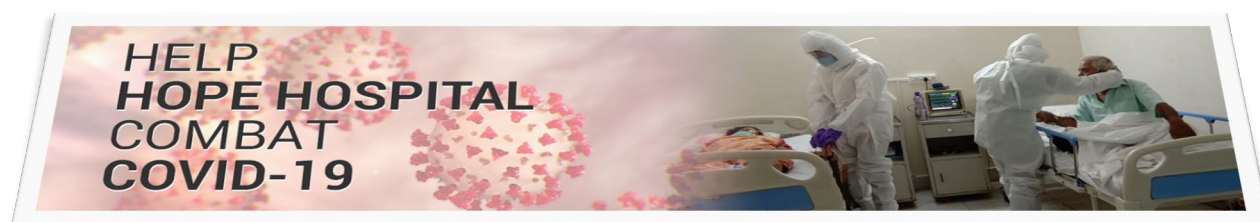
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'On behalf of Trócaire and our partner organisations, I would like to thank the Sisters of Mercy for your most generous donation of €5,000 to our work in Afghanistan.'

(Caoimhe de Barra, CEO)



"On behalf of all the patients who are so dependent on your help we are saying 'Thank You'

(Maureen Forrest, Founder of the Hope Foundation)



"Your generous support of €5,000 is going to help UNICEF deliver 3billion Covid-19 vaccines to the most vulnerable and high - risk people on our planet'

(Peter Power, Executive Director)

4. Pastoral and Social Care and Development

(i) Kanturk Mercy House

A sister administers Kanturk Mercy House. The premises are owned by the Sisters of Mercy. The centre provides daily meals, social activities, outings and advice. It seeks to alleviate rural isolation and is a venue for delivery of health care and social activities. The delivery of meals continued throughout the pandemic as this was considered an essential service. In 2021 an average of 300 dinners per week were cooked at the centre and delivered to people.

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(ii) Charleville Sheltered Housing Services:

A sister acts as co-ordinator of Charleville Sheltered Housing Services which comprises approximately 30 single occupancy bungalows with a large Central Care Unit. The project was set up on land formally owned by the Sisters of Mercy. The goal of the service is to permit ageing, vulnerable and homeless persons to remain independent in single unit housing services rather than premature entry into long stay care. Depending on their needs, they can opt for different levels of care ranging from independent living to 24/7 carer support in a private room in the group house. There are 24 staff employed at the service and 33 per cent of the running costs are funded by the HSE, with the remainder coming from the residents who pay rent according to their care package.

There is a good social mix among the residents. The complex is fully occupied and there are 35 on the waiting list. Prospective residents are means tested and, if they can afford to do so, they pay a capital contribution of €21,000 towards their home which is refundable on a sliding scale for up to six years. The home is theirs for as long as they need it. In 2021 the dining room in the unit was closed and meals were delivered to each house which led to increased staffing hours and increased costs. The HSE supplied all PPE equipment and thankfully there was no outbreak of Covid 19.



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Once a resident is hospitalised or moves to a nursing home, visits are arranged and all his/her personal needs are looked after.

The first 14 independent houses and the group home – for residents with higher care needs – opened in April 1991. Since then, a further 16 homes have been added.



Church View Retirement Village

Two sisters are directors on the board of the Child and Family Company CLG which employs 25 people. They run a creche, preschool and after school services. In accordance with HSE and government guidelines these services were generally suspended during the Covid-19 lockdowns but at the request of Túsla remained open for emergencies. The company also runs a restaurant in the same building in Broad Street which also had to close.

Because of the need for single unit accommodation, the company formed a separate company called Charleville Community Enterprise CLG which provides housing for homeless people at low-cost rental. It has 8 apartments, 1 house and 1 shop. The shop in turn is rented to the Charleville Garden Company at low cost. The Sisters of Mercy assisted the Child and Family Company to purchase the shop - the Flowerpot in Main St, Charleville.



The Community Care and Garden Services was also set up on former convent ground. This is a CLG and one sister is a director on the board. The grounds are rented nominally from the Sheltered Housing Services. It works with Pobal employing ten people having a garden manager and a shop. All 3 companies work in tandem and support each other. In total 60 people are employed.

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(iii) Buttevant Mercy Centre:

In the 1980's the sisters in Buttevant purchased two houses for ministry. Presently the centre is rented to the HSE by the Sisters of Mercy. It is managed by a sister and is open five days a week. Meals are delivered and social activities take place, particularly for the elderly. The Centre also provides facilities for a Parent/Toddler Group. This is very much appreciated by the young mothers who not only come from Buttevant but from the wider area. Some groups use the rooms for various activities such as mindfulness courses, sacred dance and bridge. The Community Nurse also avails of the facilities to meet with clients on a regular basis.



Mercy Centre, Buttevant

During the Covid -19 lockdowns all the activities, apart from the delivery of meals on wheels, ceased.

(iv) Treatment Centres Established and Supported by the Province:

Over the last number of years, the Southern Province established Addiction Treatment Centres, including one for adolescents. They are Tabor Group (Tabor Lodge and Tabor Fellowship House, Aiséirí Cahir, Aislinn Kilkenny. Tabor Lodge is one of Tabor Groups residential addiction treatment centres. Here Tabor Group offer the primary residential programme in order to help and treat individuals who are struggling with an addiction to gambling, substance use, alcohol or drugs. The programme is between 28 and 42 days in duration and consists of comprehensive assessment, individualized care planning, group



TABOR GROUP

therapy, counselling, addiction education, meditation and nature walks. Families are offered family support and counselling. Treatment is available to men and women over 18 years of age.



Tabor Lodge Addiction Treatment Centre

Tabor Fellowship recently introduced a 12 week integrated treatment programme with two phases suited to both male and female clients with complex needs, poly/cross- addiction, history of previous treatment and relapse, deficits in coping and living skills.

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Fellowship House

Phase 1 is designed to respond to the complex needs of clients and provides safety and stabilisation.

Phase 2 of the programme supports clients to take on more personal responsibility while continuing to develop skills for managing addiction as well as everyday living skills.

There is an option of a 3rd phase (Supported Living).

Tabor Group's Family Support Programme provides support for families and loved ones of individuals with addiction. The types of supports

provided include education, one-to-one support, peer support groups, telephone support and intervention advice.

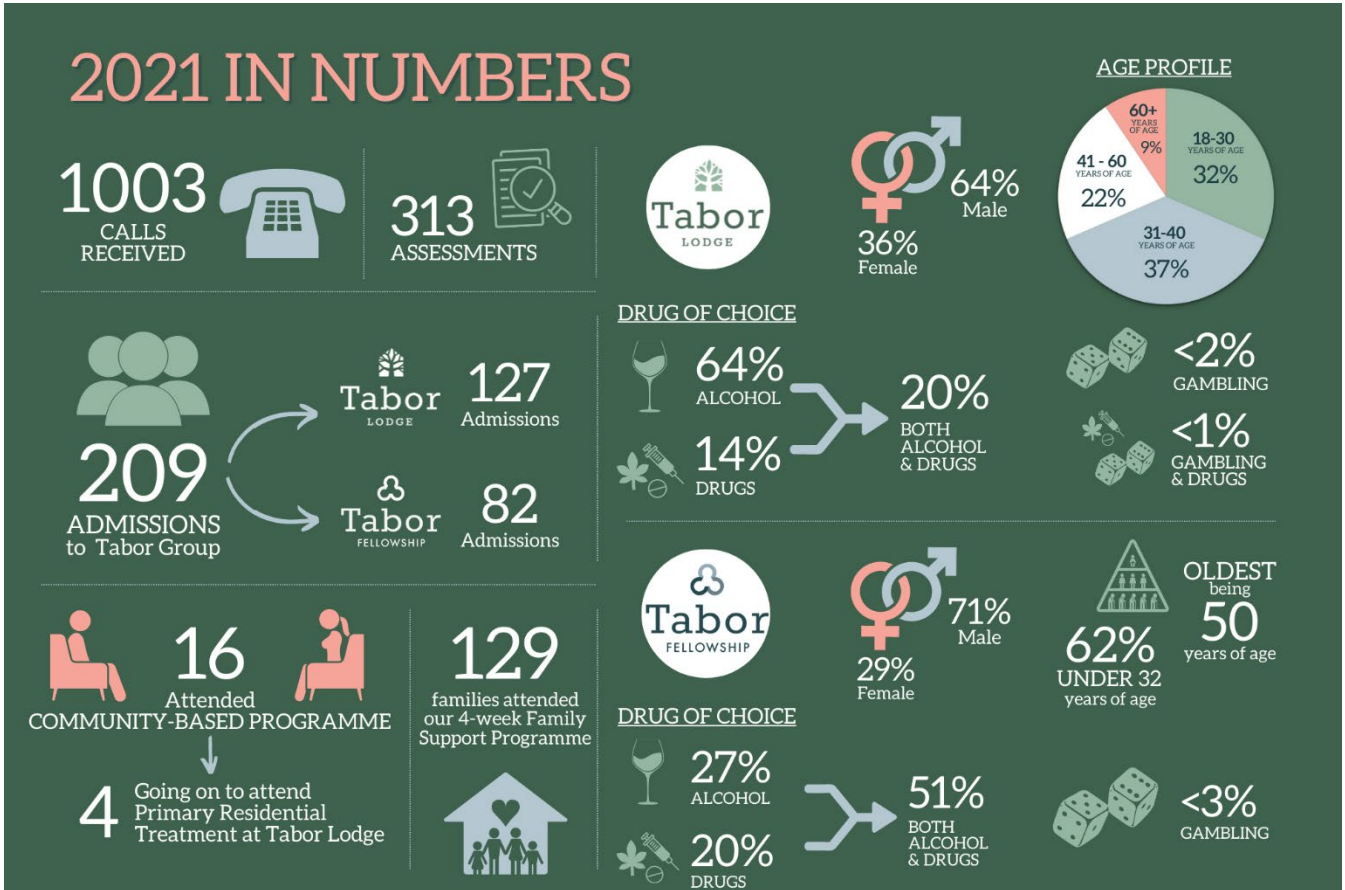
Following completion of residential episode, Tabor Group offer a *Continuing Care Programme*. This provides treatment and support to clients while learning to cope with the demands of day-to-day living. It involves participation in a weekly group meeting and commitment to an individualised care plan over twelve months, with an option to continue this for a second year of support.

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Tabor Group 2021 in a Snapshot



Aiséirí Rehabilitation Centres:



The four Aiséirí centres were founded by members of the Charity at different times since 1983. Aiséirí provides community and residential services to help young people, adults and families overcome addiction and lead meaningful lives in recovery. The work is dedicated to bringing about change in people's lives, in transforming their dependence on alcohol, drugs and gambling and helping them move away from the destructive impact it has had on their families and communities.

- Aiséirí was originally founded in Cahir, Co. Tipperary in 1983 as a high quality, residential treatment centre for adults and their families affected by addiction.
- In 1988 Aiséirí opened a second residential centre for adults at Roxborough, Co. Wexford. The attractive surroundings and peaceful settings provide an ideal environment for reflection, recovery and rehabilitation.

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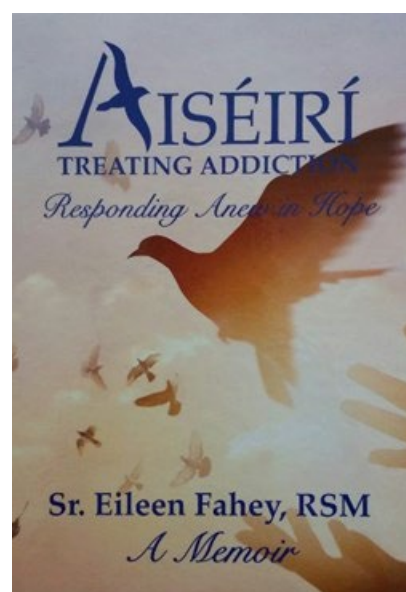
- In 1998 Aiséirí Aislínn, one of the few Adolescent Addiction Treatment Centres in Ireland, was opened in Ballyragget, Co. Kilkenny. It provides unique treatment for young people between the age of 15 and 21 years living with the destructive impact of alcohol, drugs and/or gambling. At Aiséirí Aislínn staff believe in the priceless potential of young people and work closely with families to help them understand more about addiction so that they can support their loved ones win back bright futures.

In 2003 Aiséirí Céim Eile – meaning Another Step – was founded to provide continuing care for clients, if required, following completion of their residential programme. While the primary treatment programme is adequate for most, staff found that a small number of clients may need continued structured, and residential support to be able to transition to full recovery. A major focus of the service is to assist clients to reintegrate with their family and other broader aspects of society. The facility can currently accommodate a total of nine persons. Since its earliest days, Aiséirí has helped thousands of sufferers to move on from addiction and live happy, fulfilled lives in recovery.

In her recently published memoir the courage, conviction and compassion of the founder of Aiséirí Eileen Fahey, RSM for the individual shine through. Her dedication and determination were other attributes which inspired her fellow Sisters of Mercy, staff and volunteers to provide her with the support and assistance which she acknowledges were critical to the success of Aiséirí. Above all, her story is one of hope that out of the depths of despair so often encountered by people whose lives have spiralled out of control, there is the possibility that with help and support change is possible.

In 2021 Sr. Eileen also won the prestigious President's Award at the Tipperary Chamber of Commerce Business Awards. On accepting the award Eileen said:

"I am accepting this award on behalf of all the people who have been involved in Aiséirí since the early days, this award is for them".



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Sal y Luz del Mundo, Peru

The Sal y Luz del Mundo Therapeutic Community began in 1992 as a result of contact by the sisters with a group of young people who were trying on their own initiative to give up drug use. A house was set up and therapists began to work there with the financial help of the province. The province currently contributes €33,000 a year towards salary costs.



The work actually begins on the streets where addicts live/gather in places called 'huecos' (holes). There they are befriended by workers from Sal y Luz, given breakfast and invited into the programme.

There are three phases in the programme: Welcome, Community and Social Reintegration.

1. WELCOME: This phase is in Casa Virgen de Guadalupe where clients live for up to three months.



2. COMMUNITY: This phase is in San Patricio (former convent). Clients live here for nine months. They participate in their treatment, life project. During their final month they begin to work and from what they earn they organize their ceremony (Mass of thanksgiving and celebration).



3. REINSERTION: The third phase takes place in Casa San Diego. The residents who live here are those who have no family, have relatives addicted to drugs and alcohol or are from areas of high addiction. They are now independent and contribute €100 soles per month (€30 approx)



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(v) Mercy Ministry Fund

The Mercy Ministry Fund was set up by the Sisters of Mercy in response to need in the Southern Province. It supports groups which are of benefit to, and improve the lives of, the most vulnerable. It does this by focussing on specific areas of need:

- Educational Disadvantage
- Addiction
- Domestic Violence
- Homelessness
- Social and/or ecological injustice



The province designates approximately €200,000 annually to the Mercy Ministry Fund.

Stewardship personnel meet three times a year to examine the applications and make recommendations to the Trustees. The applications are assessed according to criteria set by the Trustees.

The following is the breakdown of the contribution given and ratified by the Provincial Leadership Team/Trustees in 2021 according to categories:

Funding 2021 – Categories

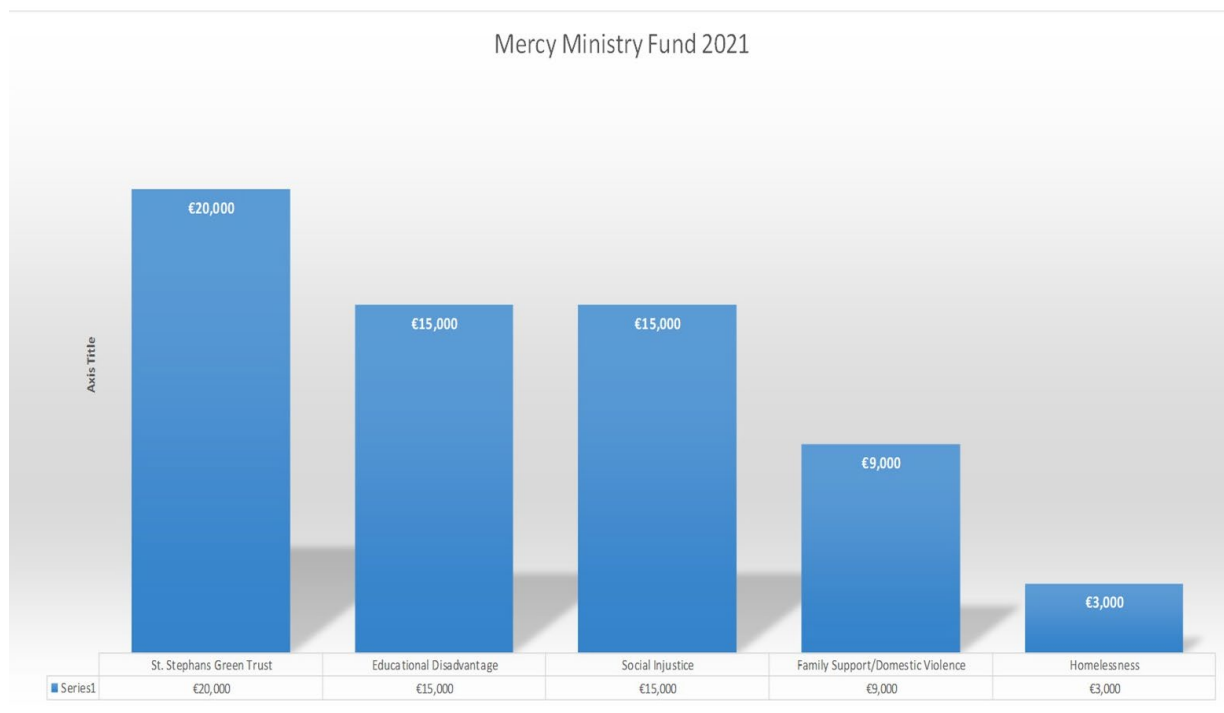
Educational Disadvantage	€15,000
Family Support /Domestic Violence	€ 9,000
Social Injustice	€15,000
Homelessness	€ 3,000
St Stephen's Green Trust	€20,000
Total:	€62,000

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Some Beneficiaries in 2021



(a) Kerry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre



KERRY RAPE &
SEXUAL ABUSE CENTRE

Established in 1992 Kerry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (KRSAC) is a unique support, advocacy and information service for all survivors and young people aged 14 and over who have experienced sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, and

childhood sexual abuse. Their main objectives are to reduce the distress and suffering of people affected by sexual violence through the provision of support and information, and to increase awareness of sexual violence and its impacts within the wider community. To deliver these objectives, they provide a range of trauma informed support services for survivors of sexual violence, including short-term and longer-term support, advocacy, Garda and Court accompaniment, outreach, group support and services for supporters, awareness, and education programmes.

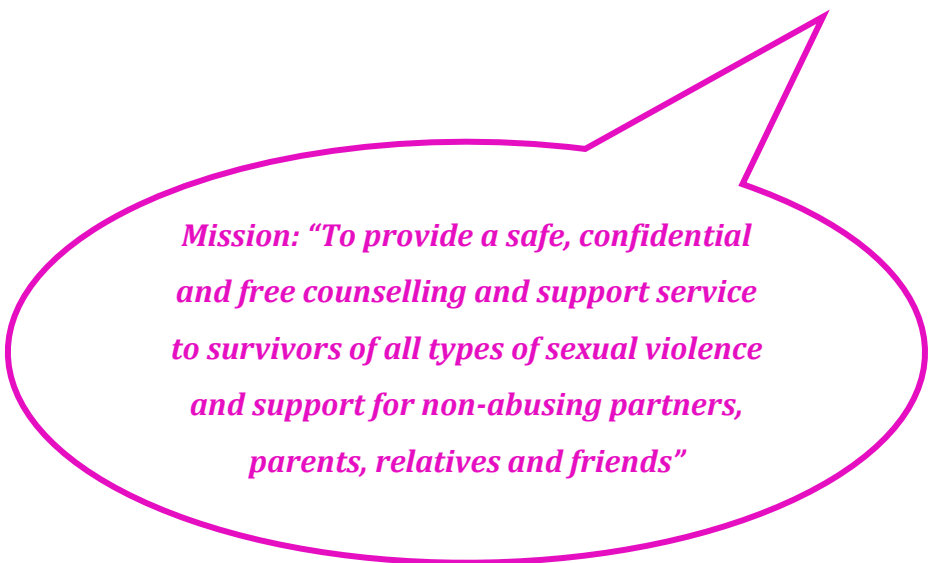
The service to victims of sexual violence, and their families continues to be busy. 2021 was a year of continued disruption due to the public health emergency that was COVID19 and all the implications that came with it. Thanks to the dedicated staff the centre has continued to operate as swiftly and smoothly as possible and I am proud of the Centre for ensuring our services could be delivered at a high-quality level.

The Board approved a Strategic Plan in 2018 and towards the end of 2021 they entered a conversation with a benefactor of the centre to work towards the objective of finding a permanent home for KRSAC. Given the positive news at the end of 2021 on funding they look forward to progressing the building a new centre in 2022.

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Mission: "To provide a safe, confidential and free counselling and support service to survivors of all types of sexual violence and support for non-abusing partners, parents, relatives and friends"

Education:

2021 saw the continuation of Kerry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre's educational Programme by providing a range of courses for young people aged 13 to 21 as well as parents and professionals, around the prevention of sexual violence. KRSAC Education faced many challenges throughout Covid-19 but learnt to adapt quickly to ensure relevant and quality education continued to be delivered by using online and holistic approaches. They acknowledge that they would not have been able to reach so many people without the financial support of so many including the Sisters of Mercy. In 2021 950 young people engaged in education with KRSAC and 457 adult participants. Education was provided on:

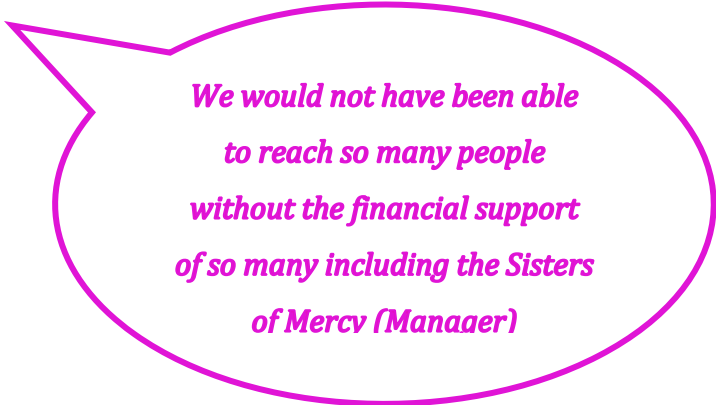
- Consent education continued and was availed of widely. This is a 2-hour standalone workshop aimed at reducing misinformation and confusion around sexual consent and empowering individuals to create healthy relationships, safe communities and reducing the rates of sexual violence in Ireland.
- Healthy Relationships workshops were delivered in conjunction with Consent Education to provide a space for young people to explore further what relationships mean and how to recognise and respect their own boundaries as well as those of others.
- Keeping in mind the technological world young people immerse themselves in, exacerbated by national Covid-19 lockdowns, KRSAC developed and began delivering a programme of 'Prevention of Online Sexual Harm' to both young people and parents in differing formats. This was well taken up and received.
- Initiated by a request from a third level institution, KRSAC developed a comprehensive course 'Responding to a Disclosure of Sexual Violence' which incorporates a full overview of Sexual Violence and Consent while developing skills in reacting and responding to survivors of sexual violence in an appropriate and empathetic manner, alongside raising awareness of the key contextual and societal issues surrounding sexual violence.

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- Responding to a Disclosure of Sexual Violence KRSAC developed and ran a pilot Programme for evaluation of 'Responding to a Disclosure of Sexual Violence' to 36 third level students over 3 separate 3-hour sessions. This again, was as a response to emerging need coming from a rising number of peer disclosures within 3rd level institutions. Evaluation was extremely positive, and this is now being adapted for nationwide delivery.
- In 2021 KRSAC began offering two online workshops around the prevention of online sexual harm (POSH), for both primary school and secondary parents and carers. Many teachers and school staff have also signed up to this training. KRSAC Education have delivered these workshops to 475 adult participants, over evenings, daytimes and weekends to ensure all parents have the opportunity to engage. The uptake has been surprisingly strong, which would indicate parents are collectively feeling overwhelmed by the dangers young people may face online. The emergence of new apps and games every day can make the internet feel vast and ever-changing.
- The Manuela Programme continued to be delivered in schools. This programme is aimed at 15-17 year olds. It aims to help young people engage in dialogue around attitudes, knowledge and skills in relation to consent, healthy relationships, social media and sexual violence.
- Also in 2021 KRSAC began offering two online workshops around the prevention of online sexual harm (POSH), for both primary school and secondary parents and carers. Many teachers and school staff have also signed up for this training
- KRSAC also created its own website for young people, parents and professionals. This offers a wide range of information, resources.



*We would not have been able
to reach so many people
without the financial support
of so many including the Sisters
of Mercy (Manaaer)*

(b) St. Stephen's Green Trust

St. Stephen's Green Trust is a charitable foundation which respects human dignity and is committed to identifying and responding to issues of social injustice in Ireland. This is achieved by providing grants to organisations, addressing issues which lead to inequalities and supporting organisations to effect positive social change.

ssgt

st.stephen's
green trust

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In 2021 the Charity contributed €20,000 to the Trust's Connecting Communities Programme which seeks to make a contribution to:

- The creation of a more humane asylum process;
- More effective community led approaches to the integration of vulnerable migrants; and
- A stronger migrant voice particularly for those in the protection system

The Connecting Communities programme has three strands – 1) Strengthen the voice of people in the international protection system through the *Stand Up Speak Out* programme; 2) Support communities to participate in the *Community Sponsorship* programme which integrates refugee families into local communities; and 3) Provide opportunities for *children and families living in Direct Provision Centres* to participate in extracurricular activities in the communities in which we live.

Through the *Stand Up Speak Out* programme projects in Cork, Kerry and Wexford were supported. The groups started their activities in early 2021 and while many were affected by the Covid 19 pandemic, much of the work continued as expected. As part of the programme two Learning Network meetings were held, one of which was in person. Participants were able to learn from each other and discuss challenges they were experiencing in their own projects. *The Community Sponsorship* programme supported projects in Cork but was impacted by Covid 19 as the number of families that arrived did not reach the target. *Activities for children living in Direct Provision Centres* contributed funding to a centre in Clonakilty.

In 2021 the trust completed a laptop donation drive in which 70 laptops were distributed to students between 4th class and 6th year who were living in Direct Provision Centres and who had no access to devices for their education.

(c) Healing Homeless Feet (Mercy Hospital Foundation)

The objective of the 'Healing Homeless Feet' project was to give practical relief and compassion to a marginalised group in Cork. A small team ran clinics at a number of hostels where they assessed the needs of the homeless and offered help through chiropody and acupuncture.

Providing ear acupuncture also helped those suffering from anxiety, low self-esteem, insomnia and helped them to go beyond traumatic experiences.



It gave people who were in desperate life situations a support that was both mental and physical. Acupuncture provided a sense of serenity and calm which these clients did not experience in a long time.

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Some clients were in a transitional-emergency refuge for people who were in very unstable situations - emotional, psychological or financial and sometimes all three. They appreciate the benefits of acupuncture and the service has truly made a difference to these service users.

"This service has brought a very positive aspect of care within the chaotic St. Vincent's Hostel and the more stable environment of Deerpark House"
(Community Nurse, HSE)

(d) Good Shepherd Services, Cork

Good Shepherd Services Cork is a Registered Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee. Their mission is to empower vulnerable women and children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and break the cycle of homelessness through generations.



First a Home, then Hope

The services began in Cork in 1972 when Edel House emergency accommodation for women and children was opened. The services now also offer education and further support to help women and teenage girls who have left home or school early to develop their skills and reach their full potential as individuals. The ongoing support and advocacy which is offered continues to bring help to vulnerable women in their own communities after they are re-housed.

In 2021 the services received funding of €3,000 from the Mercy Ministry Fund to cover a range of practical supports for children in their emergency accommodation to help them attend and perform well at school. This included school uniforms, textbooks, stationery, tablets and other IT devices, sports equipment and assistance with transport to and from school.

As a provider of accommodation for families who are homeless, the staff see all too clearly the considerable challenges of getting children to, and keeping them in, school. They also see how important a positive school experience is for children who are homeless, as school can be a place of great stability when other aspects of family life are highly uncertain.

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The funding enabled them to support more than 40 children who are homeless with practical helps to engage in school. They were also able to give parents encouragement and supports when they were very stressed, and often distressed, about the challenges of getting their children, suitably equipped, to school.

"We very much appreciate this funding from the Mercy Ministry Fund which has allowed us to make a positive difference in the lives of over 40 children and their families and help avoid the long-term negative impacts of disrupted schooling".

(A.A. CEO Good Shepherd Services)



Spirasi (Spiritans Asylum Services Initiative) is a voluntary and intercultural humanitarian organisation set up in 1999 by the Spiritans. It is a specialised service for the rehabilitation of victims of torture, most of whom are asylum seekers or refugees.



Threshold was founded in 1978. It is a registered charity whose aim is to secure a right to housing, particularly for households experiencing the problems of poverty and exclusion.



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Cuan Saor, Clonmel is a free and confidential service for women and children who are or have experienced domestic violence.



The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) was founded in Ireland in 1844. It is the largest voluntary charitable organisation in Ireland.



(vi) Wellsprings

Wellsprings/Huruma Ltd is both a residential and outreach centre in Cork City. Opened in 1995, it began by providing accommodation and counselling support for homeless young women who usually present with multiple and complex needs.

'Wellsprings' provides an individualized programme of care to those who avail of its services. Supporting girls with learning difficulties, personality disorders, mental health problems and addiction is also part of the work of the centre. The centre aims to prepare these young people (aged 16 – 23) for the challenges and responsibilities of adulthood. In 2006 a separate building was made available for its outreach programme. Both buildings are provided by the province rent-free. Sisters also serve on the Board of Management.



Founding Sisters

Wellsprings works in collaboration with a wide range of statutory, voluntary, community and disability services in order to meet the diverse needs of its service users.

Residential Service

The residential service has a capacity for up to 8 young people, however due to the complex nature of the young people's needs and a small staff complement there are usually no more than 5/6 young people living there at any one time.

In the residential service, Covid 19 impacted the young people in many ways –

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They had to self-isolate in their bedroom at times for a number of days if they showed symptoms of COVID 19, if they had been in contact with family members, or had attended hospital appointments where there was high environmental risk of Covid. This was difficult for the young people to manage. At times throughout the pandemic they felt lonely, disappointed, upset and anxious. They said they felt a deep sense of loss, were tired and left with a sense of hopelessness.

Outreach Service

“Bethany” is the dedicated outreach service that forms an integral part of Wellsprings residential and aftercare services. It was born out of the evident need for the young women to have ongoing professional support in their young adult lives, especially when leaving the residential service. Each young person who comes through the residential service in Wellsprings is offered the support of the outreach service. This



Bethany Outreach Service

This provides young women with the possibility of ongoing care and support at a tentative time in their young lives, when progressing on the next part of their journey to independence.

The time between the end of a young person's placement in the residential service and their move into the community is a time of considerable change and challenge. An intensive level of support is offered to the young person during this transition so that they have every chance of success.

The new position of Outreach Coordinator has been introduced with the aim of developing the outreach service and highlighting the important work taking place every day.



The staff at Bethany advocate for these women and empower them to create positive change within their own capacity and ability.

In Bethany the young people have warm and comfortable spaces that are used in a variety of ways. The aim is to offer a safe space, a retreat from the world where we can offer guidance and support. They are invited to be, to relax and be heard. They often use the space to have a meal and reconnect. They are offered practical support and person centred planning; where a focus is put on their safety needs, health, training, education needs, wellness checks, anticipate future obstacles and problem solve practice.

“I want a nice safe place to live”.

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The educational hub in Bethany has been upgraded with a dedicated area for young women to access a computer, printer and educational support where needed.



For the 235 women who have come through its doors since 1995 Wellsprings has been a home, a continuing point of contact, the venue for a birthday party or even the sender of a goodnight text message to those who ask for it.

While many services throughout the country shut down or restricted their activities amid the Covid 19 restrictions Wellsprings Residential and Outreach service remained open and adapted quickly and creatively to the new public health guidelines.

2021 brought a new energy and drive in Wellsprings to relaunch their website and to shine a light on the work being done in Wellsprings Residential and Outreach Service. Wellsprings had always maintained a level of anonymity in the public arena but now took a decision to begin to promote the service and the work done in order to receive funds to enable them to continue their work. This meant stepping into the world of social media, sharing appropriate information and speaking to reporters in relation to the services provided. This was a new era for the service and was cautiously entered into to ensure the longevity of the service into the future.

“We operate a really small staff team, with limited resources and we are looking at it that other charities are out there and we are this hidden gem.” (Manager)

In 2021 *Wellsprings Residential and Outreach* service worked with 63 young people and adults. Of these 63, 63 availed of placements in the residential service, there was 1 new admission, 2 discharges. The average age of the young people residing in Wellsprings in 2021 was 19 years.

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(vii) Solidarity with and Support for Former Residents of Mercy Managed Institutions

The Sisters of Mercy have been engaged in the care of vulnerable young people since the beginning of the Congregation in 1827. This involvement continued through the years in more formal settings such as in orphanages, industrial schools, group homes and in after-care of those who had left our direct care. Many young people and adults maintained contact with Sisters in friendship. Sisters were engaged in advocacy in order to get the needs of the young people met if the needs exceeded their own power to fulfil. This connection with past residents continues through visits, phone calls, attendance at birthday celebrations, weddings and other family occasions.



In light of revelations of the harshness of regimes in industrial schools in the past the Congregation established a Helpline and Counselling Service in 1996 which was supported by Southern Province. This was taken over and expanded by CORI the following year and operated as *Faoiseamh* until 2011 when it was replaced by the service called *Towards Healing*, a *One Church* service financed jointly by the Irish Bishops Conference, IMU and CORI. In total Southern Province has given almost €1,000,000 to the funding of the *Faoiseamh/Towards Healing* counselling service.

In 2021 the Charity contributed €55,000 to Towards Healing.

The Congregation contributed a total of €33,091,114 in property and finance to the 2002 Redress Scheme. It has taken a long time to complete legal work of transferring some properties and one property pledged from the Southern Province has yet to be completed.

Following the issue of the Report by the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (The Ryan Report) in 2009 the Congregation pledged a voluntary contribution of €20m in cash as well as property then valued at €11.5m to the Statutory Fund set up to help those who had complained of abuse in industrial schools. In addition, they offered to the State properties which were valued at €80,856,800 and to the voluntary sector properties valued at €15,060,000.

The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province made an offer to the Government of €27,050,000 in 2009. The offer comprised of a payment of €4,000,000 and a transfer of 16 properties professionally valued at €23,050,000 at the time of the offer. At the balance sheet date, €4,000,000 plus accrued interest had been paid, 7 properties had been transferred, and a further 9 sold and the proceeds transferred. The province continues to work with the Government in relation to the transfer or sale of the remaining property.

The resources of our Congregation which are in the trusteeship of the provinces are the product of the voluntary commitment and ministry involvement of individual sisters who served their local communities over the past one hundred and eighty-three years. Throughout our history, the sisters donated all their resources, including salaries, towards the mission of our Congregation.

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(viii) Safeguarding Policies and Procedures

The Trustees have adopted the 'Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland', 2016 and are committed to adhere to and implement the Child Safeguarding Policy.

The Charity has a robust safeguarding structure in place. The safeguarding office is overseen by the safeguarding manager who is the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and administrative support is available. The role of the safeguarding manager is to develop and oversee the implementation of safeguarding practices for the Southern Province and liaise with statutory authorities. The safeguarding committee met quarterly in 2021 (via Zoom) to review and support the work of the safeguarding office and is accountable to the provincial leader. The safeguarding manager attended 10 meetings, by zoom, with the safeguarding managers of the other Irish provinces.

"I consider it necessary to single out 2021 for special mention because of the restrictive and pervasive impact which Covid 19 had on Mercy Sisters ministry work and the consequential implications for the Safeguarding Committee...with the continued suspension of ministry work the secondary challenge during the year was again to keep the Safeguarding agenda active... a benefit of the technology associated with virtual meetings is that we can now facilitate committee membership friendly to people's geographical circumstances". (PJ Daly, Chair of Safeguarding Committee Southern Province.)

The Safeguarding Strategic Plan 2020-2022

2021 was the second year of the 2020-2022 inclusive 3-year Safeguarding Strategic Plan, which is based upon the NBSCCCI Standards 1, 5,6 and 7.

The purpose of the Safeguarding Strategic Plan is to ensure that individuals are treated with dignity and respect and protected from harm and the risk of harm.

The safeguarding committee, through its regular quarterly committee meetings, monitors the implementation of the Safeguarding Strategic Plan. The Plan forms and helps guide the development of safeguarding practice in relation to safeguarding children and vulnerable persons. In addition, the completion of the Annual Safeguarding Audit assists with the evaluation of the process within the Charity. restrictions imposed by the government due to the spread of Covid 19 meant that sisters who normally engaged in ministry with children could have no direct contact with them. Again, due to Covid 19 restrictions the Training Plan for 2021 had to be suspended. However, the safeguarding manager and Deputy DLP attended role related training during 2021.

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Safeguarding Children

The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy have adopted the Policy and Guidance of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI). In keeping with the legal requirements of the Children First Act, 2017, and TUSLA, the Child Safeguarding Statement of



the Sisters of Mercy is displayed on the Congregational website. In 2019 the Congregational Leadership Team (CLT), with the Mercy Provinces, adopted and disseminated the Congregational International Child Safeguarding Policy and Standards, it is based upon the NBSCCCI Policy and Standards 'Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016' and has been approved by the National Board. The 2021 Audit was completed in November 2021 showing 100% return from the province. Covid 19 restrictions caused almost all ministry with children to cease.

Safeguarding Adults

The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy has a Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons Policy supported by robust procedures. The policy applies to all sisters of the Congregation, employees and volunteers in our places of residence and ministry. Review of this policy at interprovincial level commenced in 2020 and continued through 2021. The Sisters of Mercy accept responsibility to develop awareness of the issues that can cause harm to adults and seek to provide a safe and caring environment for all.

The Charity has contracted management companies for the large residences across the province. Staff are employed by each company to look after the catering, care and accommodation needs of the sisters. All staff are vetted and comply with the safeguarding policy of the relevant company which is in line with that of the Sisters of Mercy.

In 2021 ministry with adults was included in the Audit. 77 sisters undertake direct Mercy ministry with adults. Most of the ministry relates to care of our own members. 51 sisters are involved in external ministry with adults,

Safeguarding Communication

The Trustees recognise the importance of ensuring that sisters and staff are kept informed of best practice and developments in relation to safeguarding. Safeguarding information and updates were provided through our Province Newsletter - "Province Life", through a dedicated Safeguarding Newsletter, and at meetings with cluster leaders during 2021.

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D. Heritage and Upkeep of Listed Buildings

Mercy Archive Office

Through our Archives service we aim to preserve the history of the Congregation which is so entwined with the lives of our people, particularly of the disadvantaged over almost two centuries. We are protecting resource material that will be available to students in the future.

Provincial Heritage Centre, Charleville, Co. Cork

The Mercy Heritage Centre in Charleville is housed in the former choir and public chapel of the Convent of Mercy, which were transformed into the Provincial Heritage Centre in 2005. The location was chosen because it is the oldest convent in the province having been founded by Catherine McAuley herself in 1836.



Provincial Heritage Centre

The Heritage Centre provides a place for research, history and reflection and is open to the public. It is also making an important contribution to education, both of young students and of adults, as well as providing a well-researched social history of the 19th and 20th Centuries in the South of Ireland. One Sister works at the centre.

Due to the restrictions of Covid 19, 2021 was a very different year in the Heritage Centre, which was closed to visitors for the entire twelve months. However, there was plenty of activity “behind closed doors” and modern technology made communication possible on many levels.

Research: Students at second and third level requested information for various projects. I facilitated them as best as I could by photographing or copying material from our rich store of documents and sent it electronically or by post. There were also many requests for information on various aspects of Charleville history from adults who were interested in local topics.

In preparation for the 175th anniversary of the Famine and the local evictions the role of the Sisters of Mercy in the Fever Hospital and in the alleviation of suffering and hunger was a popular topic. Ongoing interest in the

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Croke family, the lace industry and education didn't wane either. I was requested to write an article for a local magazine: 'Catherine McAuley and the Charleville Connection'.

Links, via Zoom, with Munster Vales proved beneficial. They provided Tourism Training over a number of weeks and enabled those of us in the area to network and forge links and share about our individual centres. The University of Exeter and the Chester Beatty Library also provided free lectures, via Zoom. These were valuable learning experiences for working with and preserving archival materials.

Outreach: When restrictions were lifted at national level we didn't re-open to the public (in the interest of our community wellbeing and safety), invitations came to move out and display some of our artefacts. A pop-up museum in the local plaza proved very popular during Heritage Week. Several visits to the local nursing home and meeting with lace makers were days to remember.

Meeting with representatives of The Wild Atlantic Way in the local hotel were worthwhile and presented an opportunity to highlight what's available for tourists when the Heritage Centre re-opens.

Cataloguing documents, newspaper cuttings, postcards, calendars, local history brochures, mortuary cards and miscellaneous photos was ongoing.

Slides, V.H.S. tapes and videos were scrutinised and indexed.

Education: Educational aids from former days were sorted, music books and miscellaneous school resources were organised.

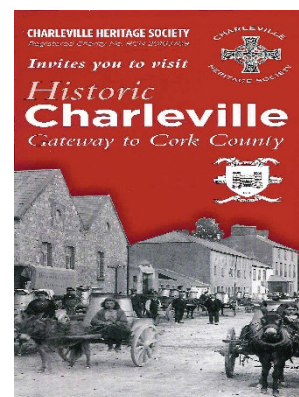
A Local History Brochure, which was enriched by many of our documents, was launched in the local hotel and will be a worthwhile source of information when we re-open to the public.



Our lace collection was photographed professionally for display on the web. A local videographer recorded elements of the History and Heritage of the Mercy Sisters in the town and plans to make a DVD of local interest in an effort to preserve a record of history in the area for future generations.

Cleaning, maintenance and the protection of fragile artefacts e.g. fabrics were ongoing.

Many enquiries about the re-opening of the Heritage Centre and provisional bookings brought hope in the darkness and gloom of lockdown. (Bernadette Maria Knopek RSM)

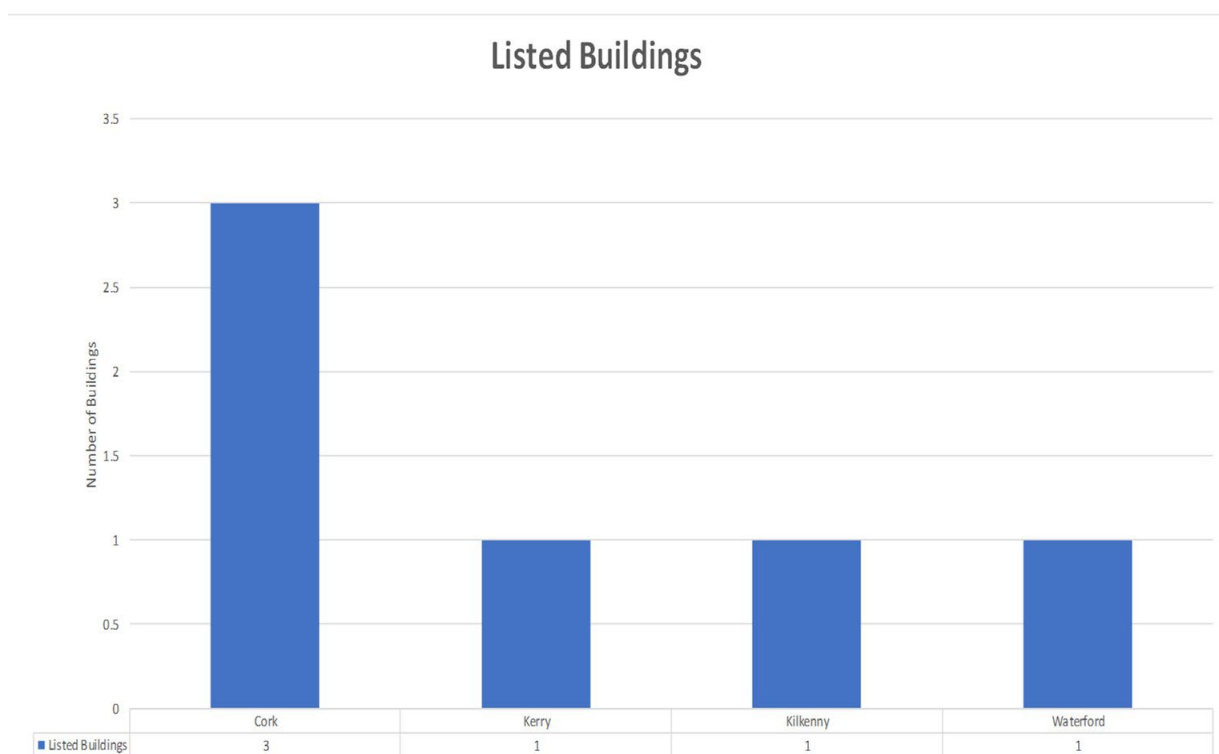


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The province owns six buildings listed on planning authority's Record of Protected Structures (RPS). Protected structures are considered to be of specific interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical importance to society. Three convents located in Co Cork, and one in each of counties Kerry, Kilkenny and Waterford are listed buildings which the charity is obliged to maintain. The Charity is legally required to make sure that these structures do not become endangered through neglect, decay, damage or harm. Certain repair works that are normally routine on a building, may require planning permission on a protected structure. Additional expenditure is incurred in sourcing expertise and materials for the renovation of listed buildings.



During 2021 the Sisters of Mercy Southern Province incurred a cost of €615,188.96 in respect of these protected structures and heritage assets. This cost included areas such as insurance, maintenance, professional fees, general upkeep and depreciation.

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Convent of Mercy, Mallow



Convent of Mercy, Callan, Co Kilkenny

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St Maries of the Isle Convent, Cork



Convent of Mercy, Charleville

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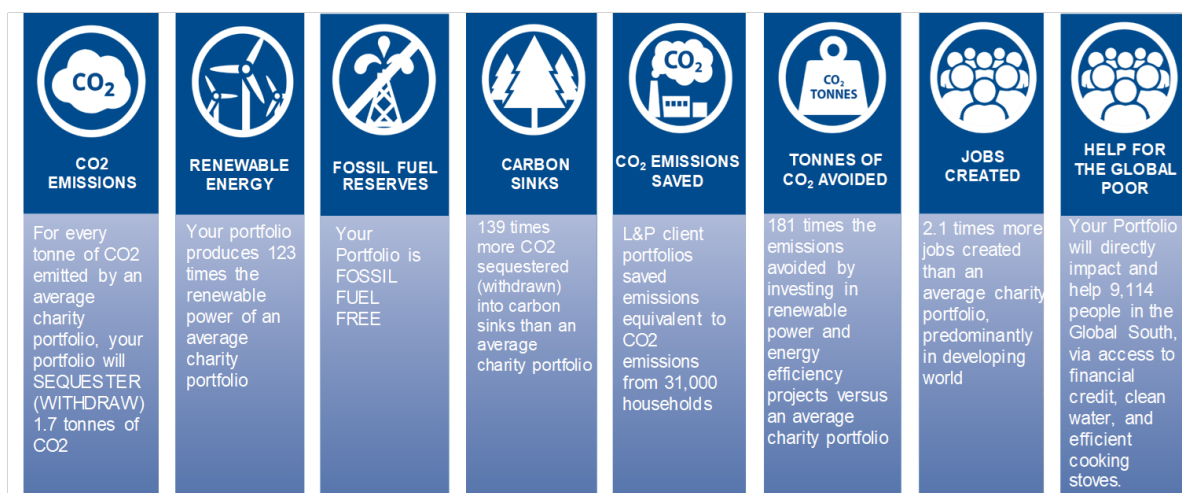
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

E. 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 investment 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.

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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 complement 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.

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Environmental Impact

Overall Carbon Footprint



Measurement of carbon emissions is crucial to help us understand the role our investment portfolio plays in the climate crisis, while taking measures to address it. As the SDG logos to the left show, limiting carbon emissions interacts with several SDGs, helping address Climate Action in particular. Climate justice is another aspect addressed in our portfolio, as climate change predominantly impacts those who've done the least to contribute to pollution and have less resources to deal with it. Therefore, control of carbon emissions in our portfolio also has positive implications for reducing poverty (SDG1), reducing inequality (SDG10) and preserving life on land (SDG15) and in the ocean (SDG14).

The Portfolio includes a number of carbon sink-type investments, which sequester or draw carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere. Forestry in particular is a very effective carbon sink, as trees absorb carbon dioxide as part of their growing process. Therefore, the presence of forestry funds means that any carbon emissions from the majority of the portfolio are effectively offset entirely by the forestry investments.

Put another way, this means that the Portfolio in aggregate will sequester (withdraw) -2,365 tonnes of CO₂e from the atmosphere per annum while an unscreened portfolio of the same size would produce c. 1,658 tonnes of CO₂e. We believe that these extremely strong carbon emission statistics makes the Portfolio very much part of the solution to climate change, rather than part of the problem.

Fossil Fuel Reserves

Following the Trustees decision to entirely divest from fossil fuels in early 2017, the Portfolio now holds no fossil fuel reserves. This section addresses the level of exposure that the portfolio has to companies owning thermal coal, oil gas reserves and other unconventional sources of reserves such as oil sands, shale oil, and shale gas. Many of these reserves may not be useable if we are to keep the targeted temperature rise (as a result of global warming) below 2 degrees Celsius. This risk is referred to as stranded asset risks and it is addressed through avoidance of companies holding fossil fuel reserves. Hence, in addition to the impact, not holding these assets reduces the financial risk within the portfolio.

The chart below shows the fossil fuel reserves held by investments within the Portfolio across the major fossil fuels in comparison to an unscreened portfolio. As the chart shows, the Portfolio holds no fossil fuel reserves at all. This is a key metric to ensure that the Portfolio is not supporting fossil fuel activities that are diametrically

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opposed to the impact the Portfolio is trying to achieve elsewhere in the investments, namely promoting transition from fossil fuels to sustainable energy.

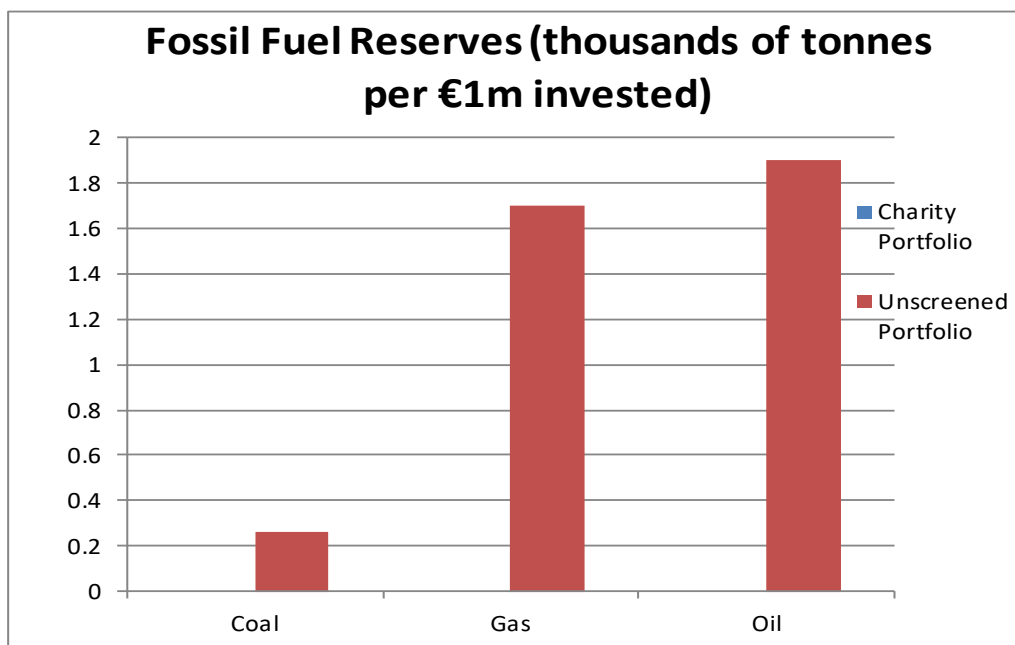


Chart showing the Charity's Investment Portfolio holds no fossil fuel reserves (no blue bar)

Renewable Energy

Reducing our reliance on fossil fuels for our energy needs is vital for the transition to a low carbon future. The pandemic and resulting national lockdowns led to a drop of 5.5% in our primary energy consumption for the first time since 2009, with consumption of all fuel decreasing except for renewables and hydro. In fact, electricity generation from renewable sources expanded by more than 8% in 2021. Solar and wind are set to contribute two-thirds of renewables growth.

Given the importance of promoting renewable energy sources to address climate change, any investor interested in impact investing generally seeks a high level of renewable power output from their investment portfolio.

Within the Portfolio, renewable power is produced by a number of investments based in Ireland, Europe, the US and the developing world. We note some of the key impact metrics of these funds below:

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Renewable Energy Fund

Renewable energy fund holding both onshore and offshore projects

- Energy for 300,000 houses per annum
- Avoids emissions of 400,000 tonnes of CO₂ per annum
- 1,000,000 MWh of renewable power per annum



Solar Income Fund

Fund holding approx. 40 solar plants in Europe

- Energy for 150,000 houses per annum
- Avoids emissions of 162,000 tonnes of CO₂ per annum
- 480,000 MWh of renewable power per annum



The benefit of generating renewable power can be measured by how much fossil fuel power (and resulting CO₂ emissions) it replaces. In 2021, the Portfolio avoided the release of almost 10,395 tonnes of CO₂e. This is equivalent to:

- Removing 2,245 cars from the roads every year
- 23,908 barrels of oil saved
- 8,659 acres of pine forest absorbing CO₂ for one year
- 1,143 round trips around the world by one typical passenger car (travelling at the equator).

In terms of renewable energy produced, the Portfolio produced 6,934 MWh in 2021, enough energy to power approx. 8,914 homes.

Environmental Protection and Carbon Sequestration

Environmental protection is a critical aspect of sustainability addressed by the Portfolio. The forestry investments within the Portfolio have a mandate to:

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- Produce sustainable timber;
- Sequester carbon from the atmosphere;
- Protect natural resources and biodiversity of the area, in order to minimise the effect on the biodiversity and general environmental welfare.



The managers of the forestry investments in the portfolio review any new forest properties at the outset to record and maintain Biodiversity already present. They have also adopted an approach in their management to enhance biodiversity by planning linkage between features using corridors so that the biodiversity features on site are conserved and new features being created are all joined and form part of a biodiversity unit within each property. These features are measured and captured on the managers' geographic information system (GIS). A detailed biodiversity classification and ranking system is in place and enhancement targets are being set to enrich diversification in fauna and flora throughout the portfolio.

Social Impact

Job Creation



Providing employment is one of the best methods of reducing poverty, and therefore it has a number of positive beneficial effects across the SDGs, from poverty reduction (SDG1) to providing Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG8). As the majority of the jobs created by the impact investments are in the developing world, and tend to favour women as much (if not more) than men, then job creation in these areas improves Gender Equality (SDG5) and Reduces Inequalities (SDG10), both between sexes and between the developed and developing regions of the world.

The

Portfolio has a number of funds which provide job creation through their economic activity. The equity funds provide capital to companies that employ anywhere between hundreds to hundreds of thousands, and therefore in theory the provision of additional capital by investors will enable these companies to create jobs. However, as these funds generally invest in well-established businesses in the developed world, the job creation impact

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from additional investment is low. However, other funds that operate in the developing world, tend to produce far higher job creation and comprise the majority of the additional jobs produced for the portfolio as a whole.

The new jobs created by an unscreened portfolio of the same size as the Portfolio would only create 18 new jobs, while the Portfolio helped create around 38 direct jobs in 2021.

Homelessness Crisis

In Ireland, there were 10,378 homeless people in 2019, and an increase of 243% of homeless families since 2015. Social housing in Ireland is therefore at crisis levels mainly due to limited supply of residential property and a booming population (at the time of the report writing, the population in Ireland had reached 5 million, the highest level since 1851).

The portfolio now includes a Social Housing Fund which addresses this chronic shortage of housing for vulnerable groups in Ireland. The goals of the fund are shown below:

Social Housing Fund

Innovative fund acquires properties for social housing purposes

- Provide €100m+ in long term capital to housing sector
- Target high ESG and sustainability standards
- 500+ new homes to be provided for social housing needs



Vita Green Impact Investment

The Vita Green Impact investment is committed to social impact and climate action, delivering sustainable water and energy services in rural African communities. It contributes to the delivery of the SDGs with a particular focus on SDGs 3, 5, 6 and 7 relating to improved health and gender equality as well as access to water and energy. Below is a summary of Vita positive impacts:

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Impact Area	Impact
Livelihoods impacted (numbers of people)	219,000 impacted by access to clean water 91,000 impacted by improved cookstoves
Litres of clean water	602 million litres /annum
Hours saved collecting firewood & water	9.1 million hours
Money saved purchasing firewood	€178,000
Tonnes CO2 now being reduced /annum	808,000
Incidence of water borne disease	40% reduction

Source: Vita Annual Impact Report 2019

Financial Review

Results for the year

A summary of the year's accounts can be found on page 83 of this report.

Income - where our income came from

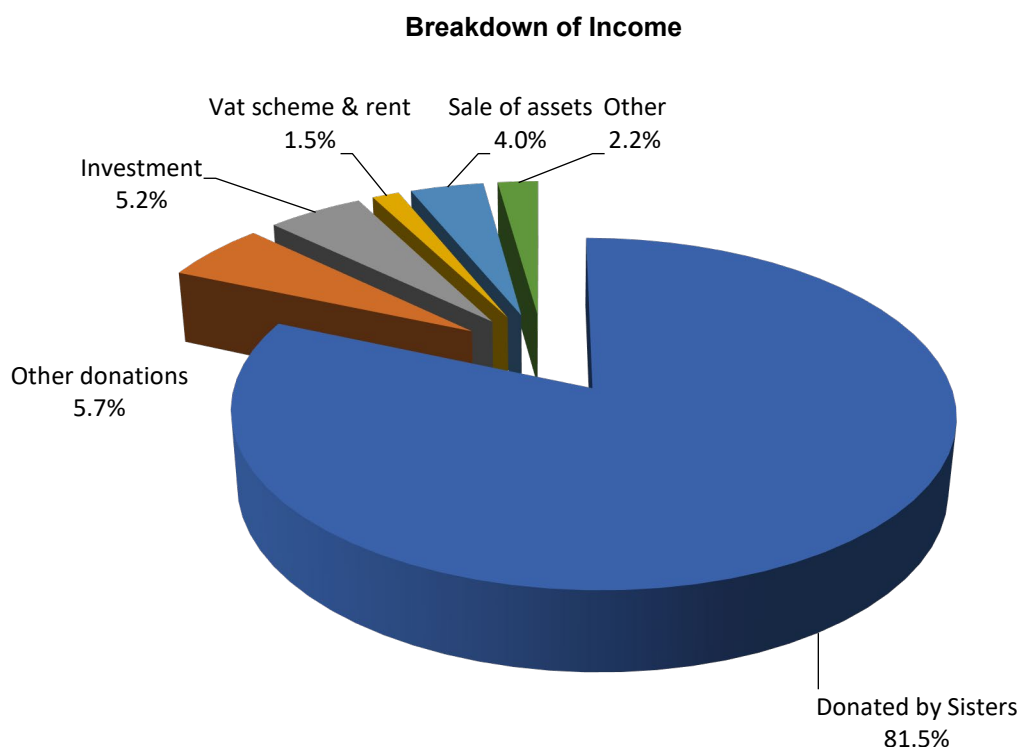
Income for the year totalled €10,572,699:

- Donations & Legacies income of €9,213,700: the vast majority of this, €8,614,483, was the salary, pension, stipend and retirement lump sum income earned by the members of the Sisters of Mercy Southern Province, and donated to the Charity. The balance, €599,217, was a mixture of income received under the Charitable Donations Scheme, third party legacies, bequests, gifts, and insurance refunds received.
- Investment Income of €550,043 was the income earned on the Charity's investment portfolio and bank interest.
- Charitable activities of €156,015 was the refund received under the Charity Vat Compensation Scheme and rental income received.
- Surplus on sale of assets of €421,499 was the surplus received on the sale of property
- Other of €231,442 was other miscellaneous income received

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Expenditure - where the money is spent

Total expenditure for the year was €11,654,507.

Charitable Activities - of the total, €11,537,155 or 99%, was spent on Charitable Activities:

- Congregational Living, the Advancement of Religion, €3,521,776: this includes the upkeep and up-skilling and retraining of the members of the province. The members who receive salary, pension, stipend and retirement lump sum income donate them to the Charity and therefore have no independent means of support. They have devoted all their adult years and their earnings to realize the objectives of the Charity. Many also give their services free in their various ministries and continue to do so well beyond retirement age. Hence the work of the Charity includes the provision of living accommodation, the upkeep, up-skilling and retraining of the members of the province so that they will be able to continue in their service to the public
- Healthcare and the Compassionate Care of the Sick and Those in Need, €5,712,369: Catherine McAuley generated in her sisters a deep concern and compassion for the sick and dying and today, over 180 years later, wellbeing activities, healthcare, care of the dying and the bereaved still engage many of the members in the province. The members of the province are involved in this work in hospitals, hospices, nursing

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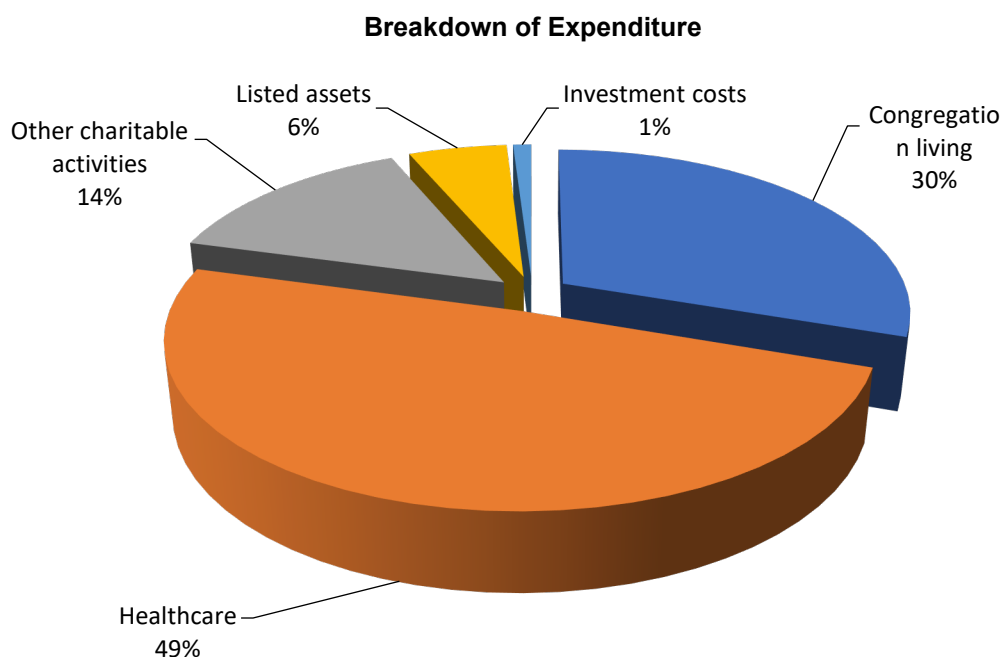
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homes, community care and within the Community houses. In addition, the Charity must care for the elderly members of the province who are now themselves in need of care.

- Relief of Poverty, Promotion of Education, Justice and Other Charitable Activities, €1,669,823: this includes expenditure on a number of headings, including Promotion of all Aspects of Education, Justice, Peace & Reconciliation, Overseas Development and Support, Pastoral and Social Care and Development.
- Heritage and the Upkeep of Listed Assets, €633,187: the Charity owns a number of protected structures. The structures are typically buildings that are listed on planning authority's Record of Protected Structures (RPS). By including them in the RPS, the importance of these structures is recognised; they are 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 these structures do not become endangered through neglect, decay, damage or harm.

Investment costs – in the year, investment costs totalled €117,352.



Net Movement in Funds

Net expenditure for the year, therefore, was €1,081,808. This was before the gain on investment assets, which when taken into account results in a net increase in funds in the year of €1,040,701.

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Investments

At 31 December 2021, the Charity had investments of €22.1m. 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 €37.0m. Of this, €0.7m is restricted for specific purposes - see Financial Statements note 20. Of the balance, €14.1m is represented by properties and other tangible fixed assets essential for the running of the Charity. The Trustees have designated another €21.2m to provide for Mission and Ministry works and Congregational Living needs. Details are given in note 21 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 €0.9m. This equates to approximately 1 month of unrestricted charitable expenditure. The Trustees would like this to be higher as, given the nature of the Charity's work and its commitments, they consider the level of free reserves should be equal to approximately 6 to 12 months' expenditure.

Review of Objectives for 2021

Objectives Set	Progress Review
Continue its commitment to the ongoing care of all sisters in the province.	On-going
Ensure all members are familiar with the strategic direction set in 2019.	On-going

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Continue the implementation of strategic direction set in 2019 Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy Southern Province	On-going
Continue the process of addressing the priorities of the membership in relation to future care and accommodation needs.	On going
Attend to the development of a model of cluster leadership that meets the current needs of the Charity	Following extensive consultation with membership cluster leaders were appointed.
Examine the Charity's structure and governance in collaboration with the other Mercy provinces and regions of the Congregation	Facilitated and encouraged engagement by membership with interprovincial virtual meetings and webinars
Work collaboratively with other groups and agencies in responding to global and local needs.	On-going
Work with and promote processes emanating from Mercy International and Mercy Global Action/ Presence to examine the themes of eco – justice and social justice in the furtherance of the Mercy Mission.	On-going
Maintain the Safeguarding Structures at national and provincial level.	On-going Appointment of new safeguarding representatives in November 2021
Update the content of the website	On-going
Progress the transfer of trusteeship of the primary schools to the dioceses across the Southern Province	On-going
Progress the transfer of the secondary schools to EDUCENA – Enniscorthy, Waterford, Dungarvan, Clonakilty and two in Cork City	In progress

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Charity-wide Objectives 2022

The trustees of the Charity actively engage in training for their roles and responsibilities in undertaking the administration of the Charity.

The Charity will:

- Continue its commitment to the ongoing care of the sisters in the province.
- Facilitate and support the sisters in resuming and undertaking the Charity's activities post pandemic.
- Work in collaboration with other groups and charities in responding to global and local needs,
- Resource cluster leaders to exercise leadership while working with management companies in the assisted living houses.
- Organise stewardship information meetings for the province on: Resources, Charity Regulator Requirements and Trustee Reporting.
- Carry out Visitation of all clusters and mission area in the Autumn of 2022
- Actively collaborate with other Mercy Provinces and US Region in the restructuring of governance.
- Maintain the safeguarding structures at national and provincial level.
- Facilitate training for safeguarding representatives and cluster leaders regarding their roles in carrying out audits and in implementing the Adult Safeguarding Policy.
- Progress the transfer of the remaining primary schools to the dioceses across the Southern Province
- Progress the transfer of the secondary schools to EDUCENA – Dungarvan, Waterford, Clonakilty, Enniscorthy and two in Cork City.
- Explore the possibility of how we could respond to Pope Francis' invitation to create a culture of Mercy and a culture of encounter.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Nature of Governing Document

The governing instrument of the Southern Province 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 province is one of four provinces in Ireland and is an unincorporated association.

The governmental structure of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy involves a number of inter-connected units: local, provincial and congregational. The nature of the authority in each unit is described in the Constitutions. The province is a unit of the Congregation having the personnel and other resources to support its life, mission and membership.

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Method Adopted for Appointing Trustees (Provincial Leadership Team)

The Charity is governed by the Provincial Leader and the Provincial Leadership Team who are elected every six years by members of the province. The Provincial Leadership Team are the Trustees of the Charity. Members of the Provincial Leadership Team are chosen for their expertise and skills as well as their experience and knowledge of the Congregation, its nature and mission.

The trustees are members of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy and as such their living and personal costs are borne by the charity. They receive no remuneration for their services as trustees.

Organisational Structure & Decision Making

The Provincial Leader and members of the Provincial Leadership Team are the Trustees of the Charity. With regard to decision-making, the Trustees take responsibility for the overall running of the Charity. The Trustees meet on a regular basis to review developments regarding the Charity and its activities. Every six years members are involved in a prolonged meeting – called a Chapter - a period of reflection/prayer, evaluation and planning with a focus on the development of policies and effective use of resources in an assessment of current and future needs.

Trustees attend formal training courses on the duties of Trustees and seek guidance and advice as necessary from their legal, investment and property advisors on the issues which arise in carrying out their duties. In addition, the Trustees have established a number of advisory groups. The function of these groups, whose membership includes various professional advisors, is to advise the Trustees on different aspects of stewardship and the general management of the assets of the Charity.

There are systems of accountability operational throughout the province. At the six yearly Chapter meeting there is a General and Financial Report to the members. The Provincial Treasurer is appointed by the Provincial Leader with the consent of her team. The Provincial Treasurer administers the affairs of the province under the direction of the Provincial Leader and her Team. The majority of the income of the Charity comes from sisters' salaries, stipends and pensions, sale of property and income from investments. The salary, stipend and pension income is voluntarily donated to a common fund, administered through the Provincial Stewardship Office. Sale of properties and income from investment provide additional income.

Risk Management

The Trustees undertake a full risk assessment exercise on an annual basis and monitor progress on a half-yearly basis. This process is supported by our financial advisors, who work closely with the Trustees in these areas. The Trustees identified the following as being the principal risks to which the Charity is exposed:

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- Governance and Management.
- Operational.
- Financial.
- Laws, regulation, external and environment.

Governance & Management risks are named as possibility of lack of decisive direction, at whether the skills and training of the members and staff are adequate, and whether the good use of its resources is optimum.

Operational risk looks at the risks inherent in the charity's activities including the operation of its Assisted Living Houses – and the risk of any members being engaged in inappropriate activities, possible unsuitability of buildings, poor maintenance, shortcomings in the services provided, difficulties with staff, poor health and safety and lack of a disaster recovery policy.

Financial risk includes those arising as a result of poor budgetary control, inappropriate spending, poor accounting and inappropriate investment policies.

Laws, regulations, external & environment look at the effects of government policies, the consequences of non-compliance with the laws and regulations, and poor risk assessment.

Having assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed the Trustees believe that they have established effective systems to mitigate the risks:

- obtaining appropriate professional advice,
- monitoring, and where appropriate insuring the operational and business risks faced by the charity, and
- developing policies, procedures, systems and controls.

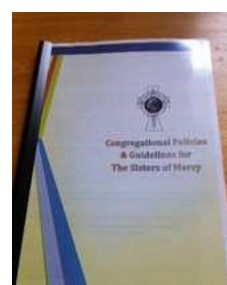
The Trustees are assisted in the above by financial advisors, various committees which consider the management of appropriate risks, including the Property Advisory Committee and Financial Advisory Group.

There have been no other significant events affecting the charity since the financial year end.

Policies

The Trustees, in collaboration with Congregational Leadership Team ensure that policies and good practice guidelines are developed, circulated and implemented and that these are regularly evaluated and updated. The Trustees have taken steps to ensure that the Charity is fully compliant with all legislative requirements.

Since the mid 1990's the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy has had a safeguarding policy which has been revised regularly. The policy aims to encourage adequate awareness and best practice



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among all members of the Congregation, and those working for them, to ensure that all children and vulnerable adults are safeguarded from abuse of any kind. The Charity is committed to a culture of safeguarding and to ensuring compliance with best practice in this area. The Trustees are proactive in complying with civil and ecclesiastical requirements for safeguarding in the Republic of Ireland. The Trustees review annually the implementation of its Safeguarding Policy and procedures.

The Charity has further policies and guidelines on Stewardship, Health and Safety, Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons, Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption.

Property

“For the sake of our mercy mission, the congregation and each province has the right to acquire and possess, to administer and alienate property temporal goods and revenues according to the norms of universal law and these constitutions, with due respect for civil law” (Cons. 119, 1995)

“We value the resources of the earth as gifts of God and use them in a spirit of stewardship ... In the spirit of religious poverty we seek to have a simple life-style and to balance concern for our future with support and compassion for poor and needy people.” (Cons. 118 1995)

We are committed to a lifestyle reflecting the fact that all our possessions are held in trust for the mission of the Congregation. As property trustees we aim to promote the mission, addressing our own needs and those of the wider community.

The relevant professional advice is taken into account in the areas of leases and agreements, protected structures, planning, health and safety legislation, acquisition, refurbishment and disposal of property and all legally binding issues and transactions.

The province has a Property Advisory Group to give advice and make recommendations on issues relating to property when requested by the Provincial Leadership Team. It also ensures that the Property Register is kept up to date.

Membership of the committee includes:

- Members of the Provincial Leadership Team
- Property Coordinator
- Provincial Treasurer

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- Provincial Financial Controller
- Property, legal, financial and technical advisors.

They advise and make recommendations to the Provincial Leader and Team, who decide on the course of action to be taken.

Properties are currently held in the Sisters of Mercy Southern Province Holding Company Ltd.

COMPANIES

The following charitable companies were established and founded by the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province:

Mercy Care South

Huruma CLG T/A Wellsprings

Tabor Lodge Addiction and Housing Services CLG Welcome Immigrant Centre CLG T/A
Welcome English.

The Trustees support the work of the respective Boards and engage and meet with them on a regular basis through their Trustee representative and at the annual general meetings of the respective companies. The importance of good corporate governance has been to the forefront in the companies since they were established which is fully supported by the Trustees.

The Trustees also support the charitable companies through the provision of outsourced company secretarial services, which provides additional support to the respective Chairperson and the Boards and ensures that each company fulfils its statutory duty and fully complies with the law. In line with best practise, each Board and the Company Secretary work together to ensure that the Board conducts its duties with the highest standards of governance.

The Sisters of Mercy Southern Province own the properties from which the majority of these companies operate. In many cases, these properties are leased to the companies rent free by the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province which allows the companies to channel their resources into the provision of the services in line with their charitable activities and initiate new projects, which ultimately benefits the patients, clients and service users.

Post Balance Sheet Event

There have been no significant events affecting the charity since the year end.

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Appreciation

The Trustees wish to record their recognition of the professionalism and commitment of all their staff, volunteers and the individual members of the province and Congregation. Their dedication and positive approach are very much appreciated.

The Trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.

Sr. Anna Mai Middleton

Trustee

Dated: 7 October 2022

Sr. Bríd Biggane

Trustee

Dated: 7 October 2022