

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

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<b>Trustees</b>	Sr Breege O'Neill Sr Margaret Casey Sr Aine Barrins Sr Maura Bane Sr Una Purcell
<b>Provincial Treasurer</b>	Sr Marie King
<b>CHY (Revenue) Number</b>	166
<b>Registered Charity Number (RCN)</b>	20000325
<b>Principal address</b>	Caoineas, Society Street, Ballinasloe Co. Galway H53 W0V2
<b>Auditors</b>	Walsh O'Brien Harnett Chartered Accountants and Statutory Audit Firm 104 Lower Baggot Street Dublin 2 Ireland D02Y940
<b>Bankers</b>	Bank of Ireland Loughrea Co. Galway H62 YE36
<b>Solicitors</b>	Mason Hayes and Curran South Bank House Barrow Street Dublin 4 D04 TR29  William F. Semple & Company Lough Corrib House Waterside Co. Galway H91 PT0C  Concanon & Meagher Solicitors Legal Services Frank Stockwell Road Co. Galway H54 RP02  Brendan L Johnson Solicitors 75 John Street Co. Sligo F91 D586

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# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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## Introduction

### Our History

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 the years that followed their founding, the Sisters of Mercy focused on providing education and healthcare and consequently established and ran schools and hospitals, and cared in whatever way possible, for the needs of those people who were poorest in society.



### 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 acknowledge and restore people's relationship with the earth and the whole community of life.

Through this work Sisters aim to redress the injustices affecting those most impoverished by the destruction of the earth's natural systems and to promote sustainable living. Efforts to support access to education for children, young people and adults have continued. Sisters are involved in various forms of healing work. Pioneering work has been done in the area of addressing addiction, reconciliation. The number of Sisters involved in pastoral care roles increased over the years.

Many continue to be involved in promoting spirituality. Now that the age profile of the Province has increased, with 48% of the Sisters over 80 years, the need to care for the frail and infirm members of the Congregation, has become more urgent.

### Our Present Structure

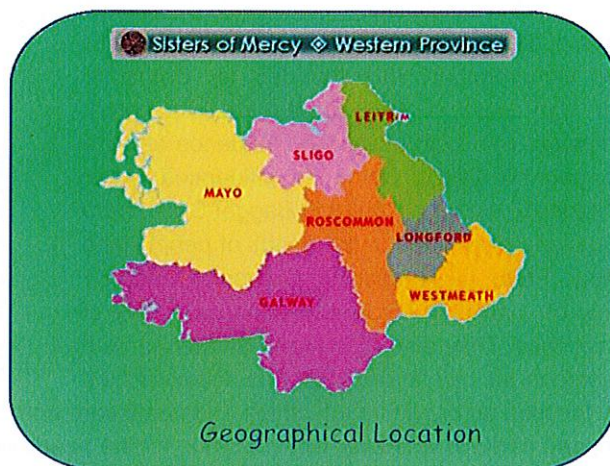
In 1994, the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy (Ireland) was formed by the union of twenty seven autonomous Mercy Congregations, formerly of Ireland and South Africa. The Congregation is currently comprised of six Provinces and one Region – four Provinces in Ireland with two overseas in Kenya and South Africa and a Region in 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. Each Irish Province is recognised in civil law as an unincorporated association with its own Charity Number from the Irish Revenue Commissioners.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

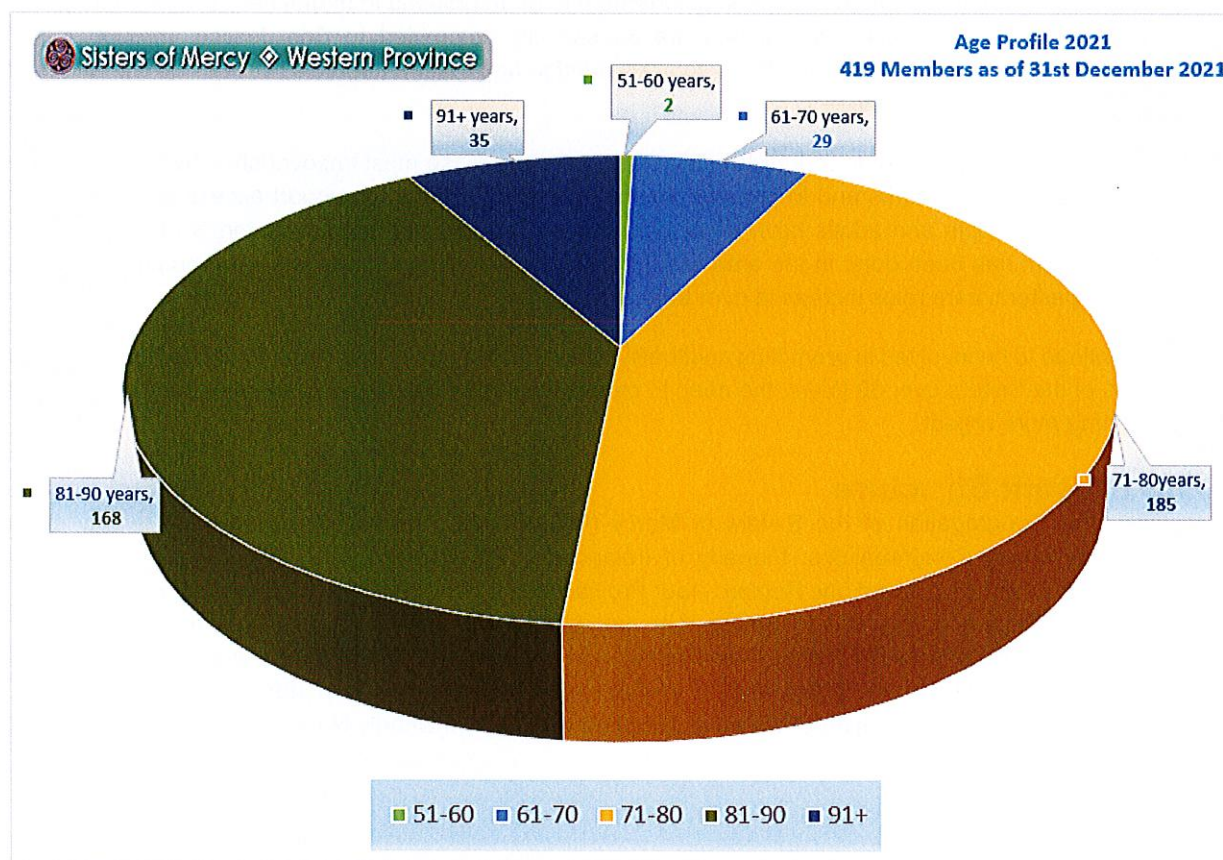
## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

The Western Province was formed from seven of the original Diocesan units – Achonry; Ardagh and Clonmacnois; Clonfert; Elphin; Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora; Killala; Tuam.



### AGE Profile Diagram



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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## 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)*

## Object of the Charity

The Object of the Charity is:

- 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:*

1. Congregational Living – the Advancement of Religion
2. Healthcare and the Compassionate Care of the Sick and those in Need
3. Relief of Poverty, Promotion of Education, Justice and other Charitable Activities
4. Collaboration with and Support of other Groups
5. Upkeep of Listed Assets

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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## Public Benefit

Public Benefit is achieved in a variety of ways, as will be shown in the Activities and Achievements of the Charity described throughout this Report.

The Beneficiaries are peoples of the Republic of Ireland, and charities that work for the relief overseas, for example, Medecins Sans Frontiers and Trócaire, without distinction on grounds of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, ethnic identity, political or religious opinion.

Public Benefit is delivered through religious activities, overseas aid, ecological awareness and a variety of services provided to families, older people and children, and to people experiencing hunger and poverty.

The Trustees confirm that they have complied with the Duty of the Charities Act ROI 2009.



## The Coronavirus Pandemic

In March 2020 the country went into the first lockdown as a Public Health measure. This meant that all offices were closed and what work was possible was carried out from home. Every effort was made to ensure the safety of the Sisters in very uncertain circumstances. This posed a particular challenge, given the fact that of the 413 Sisters in the Province some 400 are over 70 years of age, most of whom live in congregated settings. PPE gear was secured and distributed to all communities. Many activities were cancelled or curtailed. This forms the context of this report for 2021.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

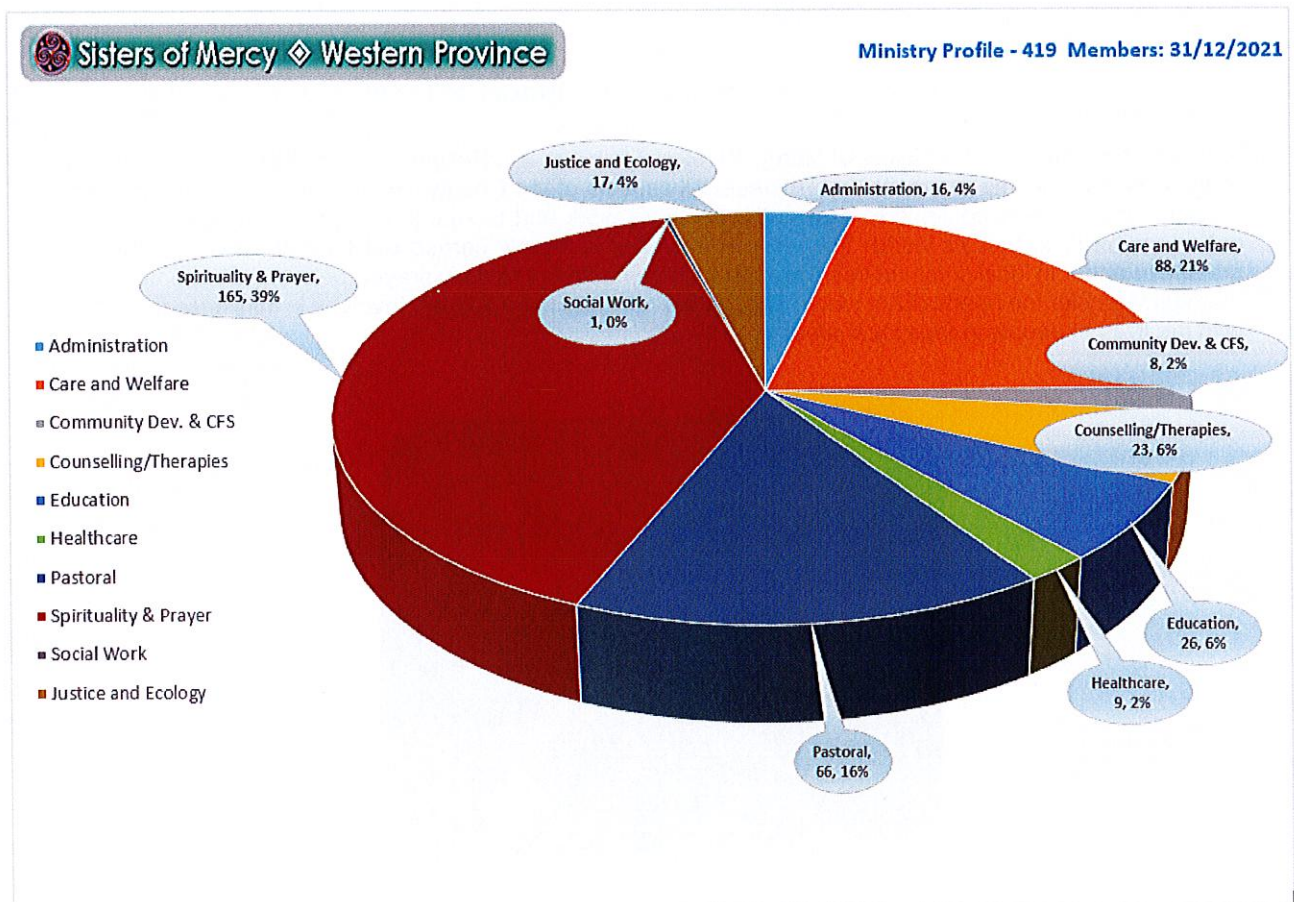
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

### Activities & Achievements

The Activities of the Charity fall into the following areas:

1. Congregational Living and the Advancement of Religion
2. Healthcare and the Compassionate Care of the Sick and Those in Need
3. Relief of Poverty, Promotion of Education, Justice and other Charitable Activities
4. Collaboration with and support of other Groups
5. Positive Impact Investment
6. Upkeep of Listed Assets

### MINISTRY PROFILE



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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### 1. Congregational Living ~ The Advancement of Religion

The activities under this heading include the following:

- A. Community Prayer and Intercession in support of local and global needs
- B. Contributing to Faith Communities through financial support and active participation in Faith Development Projects.
- C. Providing opportunities for Theological Reflection and Spiritual Growth
- D. Supporting, Upskilling and Re-Training Trustees, Mercy Associates, Employees and Sisters in the Advancement of Religion

#### A. Community Prayer and Intercession in support of local and global needs

As the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Western 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 appropriate ways of carrying out this ministry in today's world. The work in this area is mainly carried out through members living and praying together in local communities. Through their commitment to daily prayer, personal and communal, the members pray for the needs of the world. The Sisters continue to be actively involved in ministries that connect with the lives of people in their local areas.





# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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### **B. Contributing to Faith Communities through Financial Support and active participation in Faith Development Projects**

As a religious congregation, faith and spiritual development, parish involvement and prayer ministry are central to the Mission of the Charity. Many members are involved in their parish communities, in pastoral visitation, in prayer ministry and in praying with the housebound, sick and dying. They are involved in funeral rituals and parish liturgies. A number of members are involved in parish choirs. They collaborate with others in faith formation and sacramental preparation and in community activities that support and encourage the development of leadership among the people. From March 2020 the Coronavirus greatly impacted on the capacity for involvement in this regard.

The contribution of the Sisters of Mercy to Faith Development continues throughout the Province and beyond. In 2021 this commitment is reflected in innumerable ways that include the following:

#### **In Dioceses**

The retirement of many members from salaried employment opens new avenues for increased involvement in diocesan projects, especially in the areas of planning, advising, facilitating and training. In this time as lay people assume roles of management, evangelisation and liturgical development, the members bring a wide experience and considerable theological background to the communities of Faith in the dioceses throughout the Province. Sisters also engage in the accompaniment of people in their faith journey through spiritual direction.

- **Diocesan Chancellor**

In 2021 one member in her role as Diocesan Chancellor:

- Advised the bishop and diocesan personnel on canonical issues
- Processed documentation for marriage related issues
- Processed questions relating to religious congregations



#### **In Parishes**

In parish communities throughout the Western Province the Sisters continue to serve the people in their search for meaning and in Faith Development. In 2021, their involvement was restricted due to Government Guidelines which prohibited most activities at parish level.

#### **In Communities**

Daily Prayer of Intercession took place in communities throughout the Province for the needs of all people, everywhere.

#### **Retreat Houses**

The Sisters of Mercy continue to respond to the cultural need of our time for places of peace and stillness, to refresh the whole person with spiritual reflection and renewal.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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## Galilee Spirituality Centre

Galilee Spirituality Centre has four pillars of mission and ministry.

- (i) Pastoral and hospitality
- (ii) Spirituality and Faith Formation
- (iii) Ministry support
- (iv) Environment

### **Pastoral Programmes**

#### ***Boyle Cares***

A joint initiative between Galilee and Boyle Family Resource Centre was established to promote mental health across the community in Boyle. The original plan was to have a few days of activities, including spirituality. A more limited opportunity was offered online. Local businesses, schools and community groups were involved with planning, a children's art competition, activities such as a food collection, contact with nursing home residents and an online coffee morning.

#### **Faith Formation Online**

Online Retreats and workshops were offered for Lent and Easter.

#### **Ministry Support**

Monthly meetings were held for a closed group who reflect on ministry together and a Reflection Morning was facilitated for School Chaplains. Galilee hosted a practitioner conversation on March 19<sup>th</sup> to which other spirituality practitioners were invited to share what the learning has been since the move online last year.

#### **Environment**

A Series of Five Workshops was offered and a *Laudato Sí* online course programme (in co-operation with the Diocese of Elphin, *Trócaire*).

Mercy Global Presence

The director is involved in the MGP discussion group for the region. This involves resources provided <https://www.mercyworld.org/about/our-initiatives/mercy-global-presence/>.

The community in Galilee participated in an intergenerational project with Sligo Environmental Network.

#### **Communication**

##### Social Media

As of April 2021 there were 389 followers on Facebook and 503 on Twitter. During a typical month FB posts reach 7500 people. Tweets will reach 20,000 people These platforms are used to

- Share information about events.
- Share spiritual content.
- Network with people.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

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### Website

A booking and payment facility was added.

The website was developed to enable pages for online provision and resources.

The community-centred model of Galilee has extended to the online setting which is not based on a business model. Rather the intention is to meet and be present with people who are exploring faith, spirituality, climate awareness and ministry in the context of their own lives.

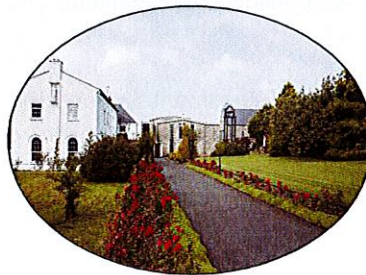
The consequence of being online attracted new participants from Ireland and the UK as well as presenters from outside the region.

Mercy communities joined the online programmes which afforded sisters who could not travel to Galilee an opportunity to participate.



It is with regret that circumstances were such that it became necessary to discontinue the ministry of the Galilee Spirituality Centre. The plan was to bring it to closure at the end of 2022 but this was brought forward to July 1<sup>st</sup> 2021.

***Drumshanbo Retreat House:*** The resident Mercy Community direct and manage the Retreat House – The Lodge – which is owned by the Poor Clare Sisters. The Lodge offers accommodation, quiet space and access to the contemplative prayer life. Due to the pandemic it was not possible to accommodate people in house and the ministry consisted of attending Reception for the Poor Clare Sisters.



The Mercy Ministry in Drumshanbo in 2021 included:

- Linking the wider community with Poor Clare Intercessory Prayer
- Assisting Poor Clare Community in pastoral outreach and organising prayer times.
- Providing a listening ear to people who come in distress
- Assisting with the organisation of special Solemn Liturgical Services

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

*FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021*

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### **Financial Support**

The Charity, by way of supporting the Advancement of Religion, has supported the outreach of the Association of Catholic Priests as a way of contributing to the development of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

A loan granted to Knock Shrine was due to be repaid in 2020. Due to the pandemic Knock Shrine was not open to pilgrims which left them unable to pay back the loan. The Charity waived the repayment for a year and the loan was repaid during 2021.

### **C. Providing opportunities for Theological Reflection and Spiritual Growth**

The Sisters continue the practice of participating in an annual retreat. Sometimes this is held in the community and others avail of retreats in retreat houses elsewhere.

### **D. Supporting, Upskilling and Re-Training Trustees, Mercy Associates, Employees and Sisters in the Advancement of Religion**

Sisters and Mercy Associates were actively involved at many different levels in the Synodal Pathway of the Catholic Church and the Trustees supported them in this endeavour. The Synodal Process was also utilized by Trustees, Leaders and Employees in their approach to ministry.

To further the mission of the Congregation into the future, all contributed to the updating and revision of the Congregational Constitutions. This also entailed planning for the restructuring of the Congregation. Zoom meetings were organised to maximise involvement.

Participation in online programmes in spirituality continued during 2021 including a study programme on Pope Francis' book: *Let us Dream: A Path to a Better Future*.

Trustees commenced the study of *Graced Crossroads* by Ted Dunne aimed at engaging in Pathways to Deep Change and Transformation.

The first stage of a reflection process was organised in preparation for the Provincial Visitation. Online meetings continued with leadership teams to develop leadership skills and team work. Members continued to avail of opportunities online to deepen their understanding of the new cosmology, eco-spirituality and to attend retreats.

Trustees and leadership teams availed of Professional Supervision. Trustees also regularly engaged a professional facilitator to assist in ongoing planning for their ministry.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

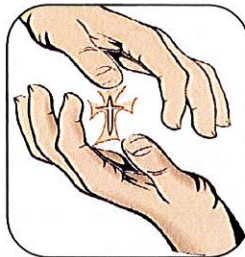
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## 2. Healthcare and the compassionate care of the sick and those in need

*The Activities under this heading include the following:*

- A. Care and Welfare of Membership**
- B. Hope House Addiction Centre**
- C. Community Development**
- D. Social Work and Social Services**

### A. Care and Wellbeing of Membership



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. In 2021, due to the pandemic, the Sisters' main involvement was within the Community houses.

Conscious of their lifelong commitment to the Congregation, and the donation of their earnings and income to the Charity over a lifetime, the Trustees will safeguard their right to dignity and comfort in their senior years.

The aims of the Trustees in 2021 are summarised below – these aims will continue to be applicable for the foreseeable future:

- Ensuring that all members of the Province receive the appropriate level of care they require
- Maintaining the properties used as Community houses, as well as reviewing these properties to assess their suitability for an ageing membership. Those identified as being unsuitable will be adapted or replaced with more appropriate properties.

When we address the care needs in the Province we are mindful of care of the whole person, ensuring that each member can live life to the full, according to age and circumstance.

Our Province is fortunate, that since its inception brave leadership decisions, supported by various actions enabled the development of purpose-built accommodation to meet our greater dependency needs. The new accommodation resulted in closures and letting go of cherished Convents which had served their purposes, many for well over 100 years, and the closure of small houses which were inadequate to meet the needs of an ageing group. Thanks to the size and suitability of the accommodation provided in the Province, we remained largely Covid free.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

### Assisted Living Communities as a means of support to care

Today we have five large purpose built Assisted Living Communities geographically spread throughout the Province with a total of one hundred and forty five bedrooms. Each facility is designed, equipped and resourced to meet the accommodation needs of the Sisters.

In the past few years, a main midday meal has been made available in Assisted Living Facilities to those living in nearby smaller houses/independent living units.



Leaders, Coordinators and Managers play a key role in the delivery of care. The responsibilities of this role have increased dramatically in recent years in light of our age profile and consequent needs. Extra care is resourced as needed, for example:

- Carers provide assistance to the Sisters, who for one reason or another, are unable to fully carry out the activities of daily living and need regular assistance.
- Increased care hours, including night care, are made available as needed in communities.
- The Leaders, Coordinators and Managers worked tirelessly to ensure the safety of the members throughout the pandemic. Adhering to Government guidelines re social distancing and sanitisation routines required constant vigilance and commitment. This was made more difficult by the fact that an increasing number of Sisters live with dementia.
- The Call of Chapter 2019 states:
  - “Aware that the care and wellbeing needs within our province are constantly evolving we will
    - Provide professional healthcare co-ordination at Province level
    - Continually review and upgrade support systems
    - Ensure that those with specific roles in this ministry are adequately resourced and supported.”

In fidelity to this call, in September 2020 the Trustees appointed two Sisters to work fulltime as the Health and Wellbeing Team to coordinate care of the members throughout the Province. They engaged with the leaders to establish the needs on the ground and have carried out various assessments to ensure that the ongoing needs are met. They took responsibility to ensure that appropriate PPE was made available to all. They arranged for the rollout of the vaccination programme for every Sister in the Province and liaised with

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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the HSE to ensure the administration of the vaccing within the larger community settings. They also built up valuable networking contacts within the various CHO areas in the Province.

#### Nursing Home Care

Our policy is to postpone Nursing Home care for as long as possible and we are indeed fortunate to have a good relationship with a number of high quality Nursing Homes in the Province. Up to 50 of the Sisters were in Nursing Homes on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021. Many members are involved in the pastoral care of these Sisters.

#### B. Hope House - Addiction Centre

The Sisters of Mercy continue to support the work of Hope House Addiction Treatment Centre in Foxford, Co. Mayo. This is done primarily by the work of a Sister of Mercy who for the past 8 years has provided her professional services full time on a voluntary basis.

Her work includes facilitating recovery groups for addicted people and their families, conducting assessments, providing educational lectures and the management of facilities.

Without the invaluable services provided free gratis by this Sister it would be necessary for Hope House to employ an additional staff member which they estimate has resulted in an annual salary cost saving of approximately €50,000.

A Sister of Mercy is the Director of Hope House. She willingly provides her time and services far in excess of the standard working week, again resulting in an invaluable and considerable cost saving to Hope House. In addition to the cost saving, it also provides a huge benefit in terms of knowledge, expertise and experience. A more limited range of services was provide during the Covid restrictions.



#### C. Community Development

In continuing to hold in steadfast commitment the vision and care shown by Catherine Mc Auley for the development of people, in Ireland and beyond, the Trustees support services, projects and endeavours and they collaborate with other groups for the promotion of health, happiness and the wellbeing of all people. In 2021 members' activities included:

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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- Work with *Direct Provision Centres* to help with educational needs of children and adults and to provide advocacy where needed
- Pastoral and Advocacy service to immigrant families throughout the Province
- Support to Kurdish families in Carrick-on-Shannon through advocacy and teaching English
- Welcoming new Syrian families e.g. an evening of welcome in Drumshanbo
- Endeavouring to transform Ecological Attitudes (Lifestyle Choices Group)

### Rath Mhuire Men's Group/Workshop

One of the Sisters continues her involvement with the Rath Mhuire Men's Goup in Granard, co. Longford. As 2021 came to a close, the Rath Mhuire Men's Club had conquered another challenging year. The club has faced the challenges that Covid and its restrictions had presented, yet managed to engage in a range of projects and activities over the last 6 months of the year. One of the highlights of the summer, was a 6-week Walking Activator Programme in Leebeen Park in Aughnaclyffe. This was possible thanks to the support of Longford Sports Partnership.



The group continued working on various projects, including liaising with Granard Tidy Towns to make their town look as good as possible. Last year the group made beautiful planters, and this year continued the good work by crafting the most unique wooden bench for the community garden area which is located at the entrance to the town.

The group also participated in the 'Mywaste' upcycling project creating garden furniture from old school lockers. This competition incorporated themes such as recycling, climate change, and sustainability.



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

*FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021*

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When the group resumed in September for dinner and meetings it was with the addition of three new members. The year ended with the men building on an extension to their shed. The additional workspace allows for painting and sanding to be done outdoors and with new members, the additional space is a welcome bonus. The Rath Mhuire Men's Club is the definition of community spirit and is one of the strongest community groups in the North Longford area.

### **VITA House, Roscommon:**

The Sisters of Mercy have for approximately 10 years supported the outreach service to the Brazilian community of Roscommon and surrounds. A portion of the Western Province allocation of funds from the Solidarity Fund goes towards the outreach of Vita House. In 2021 €5,000 was given to this project.

### **D. Social Work and Social Services**

Many Sisters of Mercy pioneered the development of Social Services in the West of Ireland and the Midlands. They work as members of multidisciplinary teams and in collaboration with other groups. They also work in Citizens' Advice Bureau, Meals-on-Wheels Services, Charity Shops, St Vincent De Paul Society, the Samaritans, the Travelling Community, Cancer Care, Day Care Centres.

From March 2020 the Charity was unable to continue its usual outreach due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. This continued in 2021.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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### 3. Relief of Poverty, promotion of Education, Justice and other charitable activities

The activities under this heading include the following:

- I. Promotion of all aspects of Education
- II. Justice, peace & reconciliation
- III. Overseas development and support
- IV. Pastoral and social care and development
- V. Support of other charities/groups
- VI. Involvement in critical global and local issues

#### I. Promotion of all aspects of Education

Education was very dear to the heart of Catherine McAuley. Wherever new Mercy Foundations were established, a first priority of the Sisters of Mercy 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 170 years. Through education the Sisters of Mercy 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.

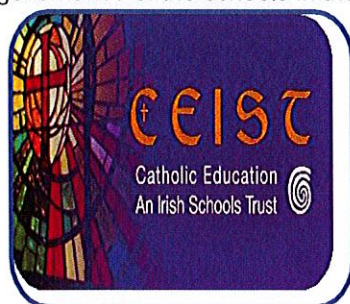
Discernment regarding the rationalisation of schools run by religious began in the 1970's and gained momentum in the 1980's and 1990's. In recent years there have been major developments in the landscape of the Charity's involvement in schools, and this is reflected in the gradual transfer of responsibility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

#### ➤ Voluntary Secondary Schools

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

In May 2007 two voluntary schools in the Western Province were transferred to Dioceses, one to Galway and the other to Elphin. The remaining 21 Voluntary Secondary Schools were transferred into the trusteeship of **CEIST** (Catholic Education – An Irish Schools Trust)

CEIST was set up in 2007 by five Congregations, one of which was the Sisters of Mercy. The trustee responsibilities formerly held by these Congregations are now exercised by CEIST which supports the good governance of the schools in the Trust. It 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.



In 2021 CEIST was the patron of one hundred and seven Catholic Voluntary Secondary Schools. The schools had a total number of 59,322 students which is almost sixteen per cent of the students nationally. This number combined with those enrolled in the 26 Community Schools and 8 Designated Community Colleges where CEIST is an agent, brings the number to 74,648 or 20% of the Irish Post-Primary student population.

In 2021 thirty-three Boards of Management were reappointed by CEIST following their three-year term of office. Thirty-three Chairpersons, 66 Teacher and Parent Nominees and 264 Volunteers were appointed to the boards.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

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Work completed by CEIST in 2020 included the review and approval of 141 Admission Policies. A major focus on ethos was supported by the appointment of a new member to the Executive whose role includes the promotion of the CEIST ethos. At the invitation of the Department of Education and Science, CEIST undertook a new role of Project Executive for a number of capital projects in schools. CEIST was also involved in an amalgamation process in four schools.

CEIST has a role in Community Schools and designated Community Colleges of which the Mercy and Presentation Congregations are joint patrons or patron partners. In 2021 they continued the process of developing the agency role of CEIST in the thirty-three schools involved throughout the country.

A key feature of this role has been to work in partnership with the joint patrons and partner patrons, especially with the CEOs of the relevant ETBs.

EDUCENA (the property company of CEIST) continues to support CEIST financially and to exercise the responsibility inherent in the ownership of school properties.

Three members are involved as members / directors of the boards of CEIST and Educena.

In 2020 EDUCENA initiated a planning process aimed at ensuring financial security for CEIST into the future. The charity committed to donating a vacant property to Educena. Negotiations re this matter are ongoing.

A number of Sisters continue to serve on boards of management in primary and secondary schools, on interview boards, and some are still involved by way of support for teaching through breakfast clubs, pastoral care programmes, creative drama service, etc. Some of those activities were curtailed due to the pandemic.

### **Spirit of Mercy Award:**

In each former Mercy school this award is granted annually to the student who lives out the Spirit of Mercy in creative and integral ways in home, school and community.

### **➤ Community Schools**

The Charity is Joint Trustee of 9 Community Schools with the Educational Training Boards and other Religious groups. It is also involved in 3 Community Colleges. The Mercy Sisters have a member on the Board of Governors of Boyle Community College. The Province has been considering its capacity to be involved in the future Trusteeship of these schools. In 2017 it negotiated an Agency Agreement with CEIST which would allow CEIST to exercise the Active Trusteeship on its behalf. The functions of the Co-trustees continue to be carried out by CEIST.

### **➤ Primary Schools**

The work of transferring primary schools of the Province to the dioceses continued in 2021. Three Primary Schools are in the process of being transferred. The substantial legal and property work involved here was coordinated and managed by the Provincial Team and the Province Offices. Other professional costs were borne by the Charity.

In the case of Loughrea Primary School, while it is not being transferred the transfer of a site for a new Primary School has been completed.

During 2020 the Charity pledged €200,000 (to be paid in 4 instalments over two years) to Kilmore Moy Parish, Ballina in compensation for loss of car parking space because of land being allocated for the new Voluntary Secondary School. This pledge continued to be honoured in 2021. The Trustees of the Charity consider this as a contribution to the education of future generations in Ballina.

### **Acorn Club 2021**

ACORN is a voluntary organisation run solely by volunteers and funded by the Mercy Congregation Western Province. In 2020 €10,000 was contributed to this project. It caters for children from the Travelling community. Its main focus is homework support but with a big emphasis also on personal and social skills and family support.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

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The Covid Pandemic created a lot of disappointment and challenge for the Acorn Club. Through the commitment of volunteers friendship with and support of families were maintained mostly by phone. The families, particularly the children missed the face-to-face contact so requests to go back to the club poured in. In September 2021 the devastation of the pandemic on Travellers became apparent. The schools had reopened and the lockdown was somewhat eased so a decision was made to visit the families. The club reopened but it was realised that this wasn't safe. The majority of the 13 volunteers were themselves in a vulnerable age group.

Issues of mental health greatly increased when families were unable to meet up with each other plus the lack of face-to-face contact with the ACORN leaders. One father expressed the loss when he said "This was a well of love and now we have nothing".

It's not only the children and parents who feel the loss of what was a happy and welcoming club - the volunteers also feel the void.



### ➤ Archives Service



*Through our Archives service the Charity aims to preserve the history of the Congregation which has been entwined with the lives of Irish people, especially of the disadvantaged, for over one hundred and eighty five years. The aim is to collect and preserve resource material that will be available to students and researchers in the future. One member works in managing the Provincial Archive Office in Galway City. In 2020 it was decided to move the archival material from Galway to Ballinasloe. Due to covid-19 that work was stalled and was completed in 2021. Some relevant material was sent directly to the Congregational Archival space in Dublin. Throughout the Province several members help through the writing of annals, the writing of personal memoirs, oral recording or the collection of archival material. Other members work on specific projects, researching and writing up the history of particular foundations, events or ministries.*

In 2021 the trustees decided to initiate the process of Sisters telling their story through a series of professionally executed podcasts which highlight some of the various expressions of the charism of Mercy.

## II Justice, Peace and Reconciliation

### a) Mercy WorldWide

#### 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 Phillipines. The leaders work together to share some aspects of the common work of the Congregation.



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

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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. This is done in many ways through Mercy Global Action at the United Nations. The Charity completed its financial commitment to MIA in 2018.

The Mercy Global Presence initiative, begun in 2019 continued through 2021. It focuses on the degradation of earth and the displacement of people. The process engaged the global Mercy family: Sisters, Associates, Colleagues and partners in Mercy.

During 2021, due to Covid restrictions the two Sisters whose role it is to carry forward the vision of MGP hosted regular meetings online. Individuals, communities, other Religious and lay colleagues also engaged in that process. This engagement is ongoing.



[www.mercyglobalpresence.org](http://www.mercyglobalpresence.org)

### **b) Justice Awareness**

The Trustees recognise the critical relationship between the destruction of people and the destruction of the Earth. They embrace the deepening global awareness that poverty is rooted in the exploitation of natural resources for the benefit of a very few. In their commitment to relieving poverty, therefore, ecological wellbeing is given clear focus. The members of the Charity are committed to support Justice Issues through education, advocacy and through financial contributions.

The Sisters, in trusteeship of the Charism of Mercy, continued in 2021, to respond to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor with unfailing generosity, giving without boundaries, towards the welfare of our planet and of all people. The following figures indicate the Charity's commitment at national level.

#### **Relief for Homeless People:**

In 2021 the Charity donated

- €10,000 to Galway Simon
- €5,000 to MQI
- €10,000 to Peter McVerry Trust
- €1,000 to the Big Issue
- €5,000 to Threshold
- €5,000 to Focus Ireland
- €5,000 to Capuchin Day Centre
- €75,000 to the Longford Homeless project



### **Justice Awareness Group**

#### **Justice Awareness Group 2021**

The Justice Group in the Western Province is committed to promoting awareness and education in helping to build a just society inspired by compassion and right relationships.

Despite the restrictions of Covid, the Sisters of Mercy Western Province continued to make all possible human and financial resources available for the cause of people in distress locally, nationally and globally.

**Information notices were sent to the Province from the Justice Desk** on the following significant United Nations International days in 2021:

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

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- Fairtrade Fortnight: 22<sup>nd</sup> February – 5<sup>th</sup> March;
- International Mother Earth Day 22<sup>nd</sup> April;
- International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 17<sup>th</sup> October;
- International Human Rights Day/ Ethical Christmas Gift Giving: 10<sup>th</sup> December.

The Sustainable Development Goals and the values of Fairtrade co-operatives were themes in 2021. We continued to highlight the slogan “**Join the Fairtrade Five**”.

- Goal 1                    **No Poverty**
- Goal 5                    **Gender Equality**
- Goal 8                    **Decent work and Economic Growth**
- Goal 12                  **Responsible consumption and Production**
- Goal 13.                 **Climate Action.**

All educational and awareness sessions for the fortnight were carried out online in liaison with Fairtrade Ireland. Links were provided and were sent to local areas and to the Province, in the hope that action might follow. The response was very encouraging especially from schools as they worked on posters and home activities and sent samples of them online to the Fairtrade website.

### **22<sup>nd</sup> April 2021: International Mother Earth Day**

Again much awareness and activity happened online with a reminder that “We must not be indifferent or resigned to the loss of diversity” (Thomas Berry) in our home – our precious earth. Many sisters keep a wildlife corner in their gardens as a practical way of taking some biodiversity action. In 2021 “Restore Our Earth” was the call from the 192 countries that are part of this U.N. Earth Day movement. Our Province was asked to make renewed efforts to restore some damage even if only in a small way. An insert was put on our International website and the same was posted on our provincial site to increase our awareness that we are in a crisis situation regarding the damage being done to our earth.

### **17<sup>th</sup> October 2021: International Day for The Eradication of Poverty**

On this day the sobering reality that nearly 800 million people live below the international poverty line of \$1.90 a day was highlighted. Donations and assistance were provided to causes that were flagged through media and local agencies. Normally representatives from the Province would be in attendance at Custom House Quay in Dublin but in 2021 virtual links were established with this event.

Many sisters contributed financially, personally and as a Province, to UNICEF in order to get a vaccine for individuals in The Global South.

### **10<sup>th</sup> December 2021: International Human Rights Day/Ethical Gift Giving**

Sisters were urged to examine how the commercial world uses Black Friday and Cyber Monday to manipulate shoppers. To counteract this, the focus was on supporting local shops, buying at local organic markets, looking for the Fairtrade logo, checking our carbon footprints and looking to support pop-up craft shops.

### **Liaising with Local Agencies**

At local level, as a Province we integrate with agencies that help in our ongoing commitment to alleviate poverty locally and globally:

**Touch Ireland** – In 2021 Action with this agency was carried out online to raise awareness of situations, especially in some regions of Zambia.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

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**Breffni Mental Health** is a local group that helps run annual events to try and de-stigmatise mental health issues. These events are advertised under the heading "Leitrim Health is Wealth", "It's ok not to be ok and it's ok to ask for help" and are adopted as slogans. The 2021 gatherings were solely virtual. A Mercy presence was there through the web link. Mercy membership enabled this group to support a local family with issues relating to counselling at nearby hospitals.



**Leitrim Development Kurdish Refugee Support:** Involvement with this group dates back to 2007. Support was given to deal with issues such as housing, job seekers, assisting with getting Irish citizenship and local County Councils. In 2021 a young Kurdish woman graduated from Sligo Institute of Technology with a Masters in Pharmaceutical Science, which was a great example of how this community has benefitted from Mercy support. During the last three months of 2021 it was possible to assist a group of local refugees with a Housing Resettlement Programme through generous funding provided by Mercy Mission and Development. Liaising with the local St. Vincent de Paul conference continues to be an important connection in support of this community.



### c) **Childcare**

#### **Solidarity with and support for former residents of Industrial Schools**

See appendix 1 – story to date

#### **Financial Support**

In 2021

€40,000.00 was contributed to the counselling service  
*Towards Healing*

€36,147 paid to support families of former residents

€31,200 was paid to the Safeguarding Manager



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

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### III Overseas development and support

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, Western Province. 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.

The Charity is attentive to world issues and endeavours to relieve distress wherever possible through **Emergency Relief**. In collaboration with other charitable agencies it has provided relief in terms of financial help to support people in need:

- €4,000 Médécins Sans Frontières in support of migrant people
- €2,000 VITA community development in Ethiopia.
- €5,000 Concern
- €10,000 Trócaire
- €3,000 Self Help Africa
- €1,000 Sightsavers



### IV Pastoral, Social Care and Development

The Charity is concerned with promoting pastoral and social development initiatives and responding to the needs of our time in line with Christian values. The majority of this work is carried out by the members of the Province at local level.

The aims of the Trustees in this area include:

- Enabling all members to carry out meaningful social and pastoral work within the community after assessing their skills and the needs of the local area
- Encouraging and motivating members to work with and assist the poor, elderly and marginalized.

The following are examples of the social and pastoral work undertaken by individual members:

Within the limitations of restrictions, Sisters continued in the ministry of

- Working with abused and disadvantaged women
- Community social work with the homeless
- Social and pastoral ministry
- Advocacy and support for asylum seekers and refugees
- Support of former residents of industrial schools.
- Chaplaincy



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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### V Support of other charities/groups

The Charity supports a number of other charities / groups in a variety of ways:



- Through the provision of operational space at no or minimal rent
- Through the provision of personnel
- Through the provision of direct cash funding

The Trustees' aim is to work in collaboration with these other charities / groups in their efforts to build a just and peaceful society.

### 2021 Update

The Charity made financial contributions to a variety of discerned needs.

#### *Mercy Ministry Support Fund*

The Mercy Ministry Fund is an example of financial help at local level. At this time in the history of the Sisters of Mercy, with an increasing age profile and reduction in numbers, it is not possible to respond actively to the many needs of society which are crying out to be addressed. In an attempt to empower and enable disadvantaged individuals and groups to address their own needs and those of society in which they live, a Mercy Ministry Fund was established in 1998. €125,000 is set aside each year for ministries and needs where members work in partnership with others.

#### In 2021

€124,150 was donated to local needs for the relief of poverty/support of people in distress.

- € 42,200 Family support
- € 8,300 Local Social Services
- €21,750 Local St. Vincent de Paul
- €12,200 Educational Ministry
- €5,500 Women's Groups and Men's Shed
- €7,500 Spirituality
- €10,200 Cancer Care / Hospice
- €9,000 Addiction Centre
- €6,000 Care for the Environment
- €1,500 Direct Provision

In addition to the above, the sum of €37,750 was contributed at the discretion of the Provincial to support specific families in need.

### VI Involvement in critical global and local issues

The Charity is deeply concerned about Global Poverty and the Ecological issues facing our world and encourages the members of the Province to engage in awareness raising, advocacy and education as a means of promoting sustainable living and development. The Charity works collaboratively with Mercy Congregations throughout the world, with Government, Statutory and voluntary agencies at all levels to address urgent global challenges.

In support of this commitment the Sisters of Mercy, Western Province run an ecological centre at **An Gairdín**, Portumna, Co. Galway. The members at the centre live a sustainable lifestyle and invite others to do likewise. In 2015 a new plant manager was appointed to develop and update the Centre and its activities. This project is financed by the Charity.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

*FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021*

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### An Gáirdín Organic and Ecology Centre Activities and Events 2021



#### **Programmes**

Towards 2030: Modules are offered to Transition Year and Leaving Cert students on relevant topics. Students from the local educational institutions are facilitated for work experience.

#### A Spoonful of Sustainability:

This programme consisted of six modules with residents of a local housing estate on how to be sustainable and promote biodiversity in the garden. Permanent educational and attractive signage on the topics covered were designed by the course participants.

Film based on the Universe Story: In collaboration with NUIG the work on producing a short film on the Universe Story suitable for primary schools has begun. Work has also begun on a mural of the Story of the Universe outdoors on a long wall .

#### Study group:

A fortnightly group session is facilitated on Earth issues and Spirituality. This initiative supports the vision and action of the Centre.

#### Organic production and market:

Organic vegetables and fruit are cultivated. These supply a small local seasonal market. Preserves and juices are made and are sold in the market and in a local shop.

#### Tree plantation and dedication grove:

The Oak Plantation continues to be maintained by gradually adding some understory trees. Some damaged trees in the Dedication Grove have been replaced.

#### Rainwater harvesting:

The capacity to harvest rainwater has been increased – a measure necessary because of the recurring pattern of recent spring and summer dry weather.

#### Community Employment Scheme – Department of Social Protection.

5 participants on the Community Employment Scheme are sponsored by the Centre. They receive training, develop multiple skills and offer an outstanding service during their time at An Gáirdín.

#### Iontas – Education Centre:

In addition to using the centre for their own programmes and for the staff, local voluntary groups use Iontas. It is also used by groups for training days and for various classes, e.g Yoga and Writers' Group.

#### Social Media:

The Gáirdín Facebook page and website are used to highlight topics of biodiversity interest.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

*FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021*

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Port Omna Beo Biodiversity Group:

The Centre continues its involvement with the local biodiversity group.



### Lifestyle Choices Group

This group has been in existence since 2009 and was the group that was instrumental in carrying forward the Provincial commitment to VITA. It is now known as the Lifestyle Choices Group. Membership of the group is by invitation and is comprised of Sisters and lay colleagues. Their focus is very much in keeping with the call of the Provincial Chapter and all of their activity is undertaken within the context of the Congregational Policy for Ecological Responsibility.

In the last year they have made great efforts to inform the members of the Province and people in their networks to take personal and communal action against the catastrophe that Climate Change could bring.

They network with a wide variety of other groups whose focus is similar to theirs.

The group has produced a slide show that has been used in communities and with staff to highlight awareness of the need to live in ecologically friendly ways. This in time may become a resource that will be of appeal to a wider audience

Local Radio – Midwest:

In 2021 fourteen presentations of 3-5 minutes each were made on Midwest Radio. One topic each week on environmental issues was broadcast. Topics included Trees, Hope, Recycling of glass, Fairtrade, Leaving a wild space in the garden, the place of bogs in the ecosystem, Rural Eco Congregation parish, Practical ways of conserving energy in the home, COP26, Human trafficking in the context of Climate change. This initiative has been very well received by the broader community.

Tree Project:

A tree project was initiated by the Provincial team which influenced the Sisters to become involved. They donated €5000 to this venture through Vita, Afri and African Aid.

Direct Provision:

In the Mercy Sisters Western Province Geographical area there are two Direct Provision Centres: Globe House, Sligo and Ballyhaunis Co. Mayo. The Lifestyle Choices group is involved with the latter. Coffee mornings took place via Zoom between some members of the Lifestyle Choices group, sisters in communities and women in Direct Provision. The purpose of the meetings was to enable both groups to get to know one another and to maintain contact during lockdown. Primary and Secondary School students in direct Provision have received financial assistance towards participating in school based and extra-curricular activities. An undocumented University student has been supported through the provision of funds towards her maintenance.

A Christmas treat was provided for 120 children in the Direct Provision services.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

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There is also an outreach to Syrian Refugees in Drumshanbo and in Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim.

A Vegetable Tunnel Project was supported by the provision of seed and fertilizer.

Ongoing contact and communication is maintained between the NGO, Vita and the Lifestyle Choices Group. One member of the group is on the Vita Board of Trustees. A meeting was held in September 2021 between members of the Lifestyle Choices Group and the Mercy Investment Services USA.

Communication with the Province is maintained through submitting material for the monthly PLT Noticeboard and the Provincial Newsletter, *Scéalta ón Iarthar*.

## 4. Collaboration with and Support of Other Groups

The Western Province 2019 Chapter Statement states:

"In all our endeavours we work in partnership with other relevant agencies and bodies."

Reference has been made numerous times throughout this report that demonstrate the truth of the above statement. This collaboration happens in a variety of ways through networking, personnel, financial support and in our governance structures. We collaborate with the Congregational Leadership, the other Provinces, Mercy International Association, Church Authorities, AMRI. In our ministries we comply with all civil guidelines, particularly with regard to Safeguarding, The Charity Regulator, GDPR as well as Policies and Public Health guidelines issued by the Government during the pandemic.

### Financial Support of Other Groups

Below is a selection of responses to the donations made to other agencies:



"The Capuchin Day Centre is run as an apostolate (work) of the Irish Capuchin Franciscan Order and for over 50 years, has operated a food and day care facility for people who are homeless or in need. From humble beginnings we have grown to be the biggest food centre in the city (Dublin). Each day we have 2/300 people for breakfast and often over 600 for lunch. Apart from the people who eat on the premises, every Wednesday we distribute over 1,700 food parcels for people on the poverty threshold who are finding it difficult to feed their families.

We provide showers and clean clothing which is of great benefit particularly to the rough sleepers. We have a designated family area where parents and children can enjoy a nutritious meal in comfort and safety and also supply baby food and nappies for families living in emergency accommodation. In keeping with the Spirit of St. Francis of Assisi, all our services are completely free of charge.

In these days of alarming economic uncertainty and rising unemployment we are bracing ourselves for what could be the biggest challenge ever and hope that with the help of kind people like you, we will be able to make a Capuchin response to help those most in need."

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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Merchants Quay Ireland

"... because of your very generous gift of €5,000... Thanks to you our windows are glowing and our doors are open to the men and women most in need – whether weary or lonely, hungry or hurting. You make sure that people who are homeless receive the warmest of welcomes. A nourishing meal and a hot shower, to ease the pangs of hunger and thaw the cold that goes deep into the bones."



"Homelessness in Ireland is in crisis. It can feel almost unsolvable. For over 40 years Threshold has been at the frontline and cutting edge of supporting those at risk of losing their home. By far the most impactful and cost effective solution is to stop it from happening in the first place. With the help of our supporters and donors such as those from Sisters of Mercy Western Province, Threshold stops homelessness from happening. The fantastic support we received from Sisters of Mercy last year helped us to save over 8,350 families from the chaos of homelessness- over 10,000 adults and 8,000 children are still in their homes. Every €240 invested in Threshold saved a home. Together, with our supporters,

we stop homelessness.



PO Box 950, Newbridge,  
Co Kildare, Ireland

t 00 353 45 480 666

e [info@ssgt.ie](mailto:info@ssgt.ie)

w [www.ssgt.ie](http://www.ssgt.ie)

"St. Stephen's Green Trust is an independent social justice grant maker which works across the island of Ireland. Their primary purpose is to make grants to groups to allow them to effect positive social change in areas which trustees deem to be critical. The Sisters of Mercy, Western Province have contributed €20,000 to their *Connecting Communities Programme*. This 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; 3) Provide opportunities for children and families living in Direct Provision Centres to participate in extra-curricular activities in the communities in which they live."

Médecins Sans Frontières

"Thank you so much for your generous donation of €4,000. From refugee camps in Sudan to emergency covid-19 wards in Brazil, MSF's medical humanitarian work in 2021 spanned over 70 countries and included responses to disease outbreaks, natural disasters, healthcare gaps and more.

It is thanks to our generous supporters that this work is made possible. As well as providing the necessary medical staff and equipment, our ability to go to places that others can't or won't, based solely on medical need depends on independent donations from supporters like you."

Pieta

"Your support (€3,000) allows us to continue to offer our services for free to those who need them: those in suicidal crisis, those who self-harm and anyone who has been bereaved by suicide. Through this work we can carry out our vision of creating 'a world where Suicide, Self-harm and Stigma have been replaced by Hope, Self-care and Acceptance.'"

Concern

"Thank you so much for your kind donation of €5,000. ...The kindness you have shown by sending a gift will provide the emergency therapeutic food that can help a child recover from malnutrition and save their life. It is truly incredible the difference being able to receive that treatment will have."



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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"With your gift to Self Help Africa you are enabling vulnerable farming families to grow more, earn more and have more nutritious meals. You are encouraging enterprise, placing women at the centre of development and assisting farming communities to adapt to a changing climate."



" The money raised will help maintain all our services which are so badly needed and appreciated by families caring for a loved one who is living with Alzheimers Disease. We know the demands that are on people now and that every penny counts, which makes your donation all the more precious. Our vision is to ensure people living with dementia can enjoy a meaningful life as an active member of community for as long as possible by providing:

- ✓ In-home support in Mayo, Galway and Roscommon
- ✓ Respite and day care in Mayo and Galway
- ✓ Providing dementia specific care and enabling the primary carer to have a break from caring
- ✓ Long stay is also available in Galway.

With your help we will continue to meet the growing demand for services in the West of Ireland."

### OTHER GROUPS SUPPORTED BY THE CHARITY IN 2021

Western Alzheimers	€3,000
Cancer Care West	€5,000
Casa	€5,000
Médècins sans Frontiers	€4,000
Pieta	€3,000
Don Bosco Care	€5,000
L'Arche	€1,000
St. Stephen's Green Trust	€20,000
Castlebar Social Services	€1,000
Kilmore Moy Parish Ballina	€100,000
Galway Hospice	€3,000

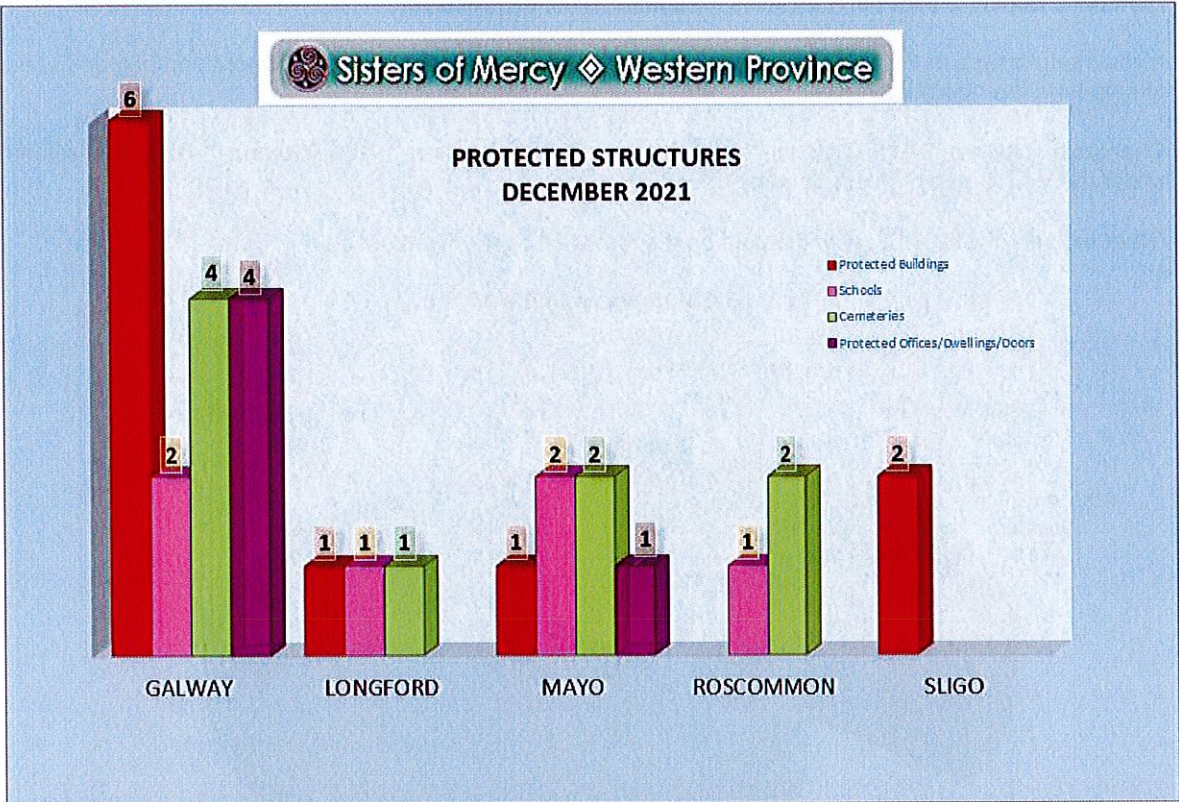
# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

### 5. Upkeep of listed assets

The Charity owns 20 protected structures and 9 protected cemeteries. 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. When refurbishment needs to be carried out on any of these buildings, more stringent laws are applied by the local Planning Office. Oftentimes such repair works require planning permission. Renovation can prove very costly due to the expertise and materials required.



#### All Associated with the Charity

The Trustees wish to record their recognition of the professionalism and commitment of staff, volunteers, members of the Province and all associated with the Charity. Their great dedication and positive approach are very much appreciated.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

## Financial Review

### Results for the year

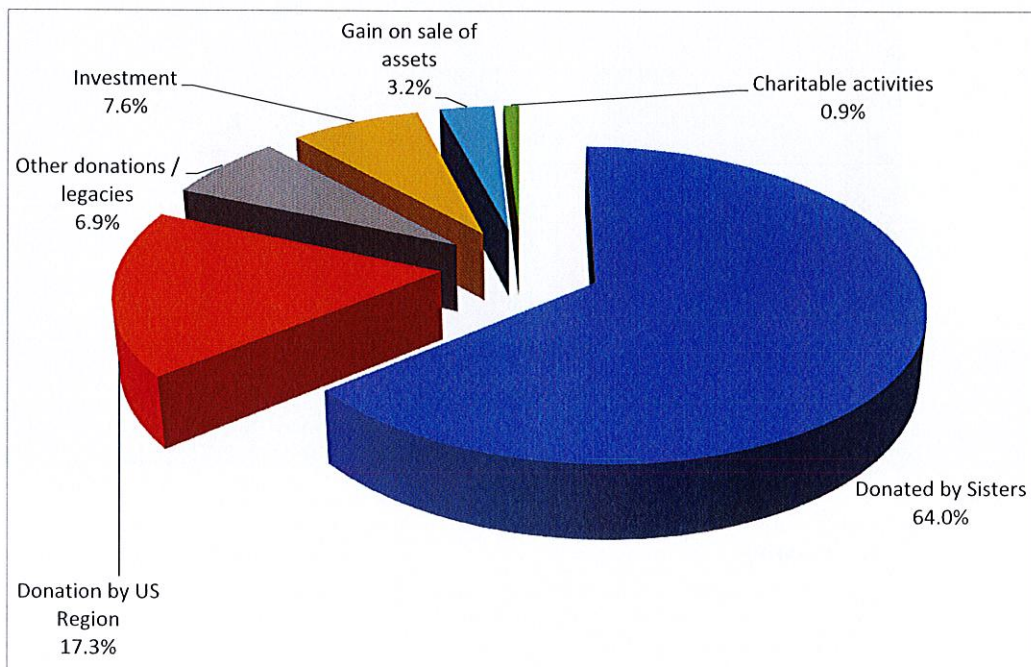
A summary of the year's accounts can be found on page 54 of this report.

### Income - where our income came from

Income for the year totalled €14,684,278:

- Donations and legacies of €12,959,989: the vast majority of this, €9,399,932, was the salary, pension, stipend and retirement lump sum income earned by the members of the Sisters of Mercy Western Province and donated to the Charity. It also includes a €2,544,596 donation received from the Sisters of Mercy US Region. The balance, €1,015,461, was a mixture of income received under the Charitable Donations Scheme, third party legacies, bequests, gifts, etc, received.
- Investment Income of €1,118,579: was the income earned on the Charity's investment portfolio and used to help fund the operating deficit.
- Charitable activities of €135,202: this was the rental income received of €88,570 and the Charity's refund under the VAT Compensation Scheme of €46,632.
- Other income of €470,508: was the gain on disposal of tangible fixed assets.

### Breakdown of Income





# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

*FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021*

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### **Expenditure - where the money is spent**

Total expenditure for the year was €13,835,387.

Charitable Activities - of the total, €13,540,338 or 98%, was spent on Charitable Activities:

- Congregation living, the advancement of Religion, €6,019,855: 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 of 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 both the upkeep and 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, €5,534,526: 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 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 are in need of care.
- Relief of poverty, promotion of education, justice and other charitable activities, €1,360,559: 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, Support of other charities/groups and Involvement in critical global and local issues
- Upkeep of listed assets, €625,398: the Charity owns 20 protected structures and nine protected cemeteries. 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.

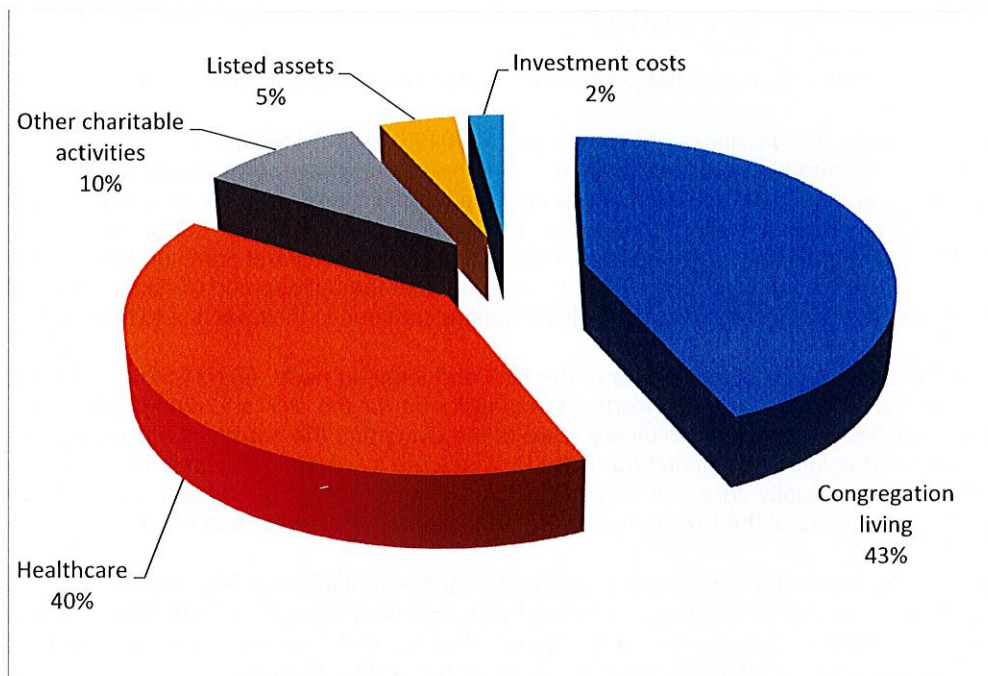
Investment costs – in the year, investment costs totalled €295,049.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

Breakdown of Expenditure



### Net movement in funds

Net income for the year, therefore, was €848,891. This was before the gain on investment assets, which when taken into account results in a net increase in funds in the year of €6,641,163.

### Investments

At 31 December 2021, the Charity had investments of €52.7m. 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 €99.0m. Of this, €0.1m is restricted for specific purposes - see Financial Statements note 20. Of the balance, €39.9m is represented by properties and other tangible fixed assets essential for the running of the Charity. The Trustees have designated another €55.9m to provide for Mission and Ministry works and Congregation Living needs. These designations are based on a *Resource Assessment* study that the Trustees commissioned in 2015. The *Resource Assessment* study is a demographic and financial model for assessing likely future commitments using specialised techniques and processes. It uses qualitative and quantitative methodologies to build a projection of future 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.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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Un-designated or general funds amount to €3m. This equates to approximately three months of unrestricted charitable expenditure. The Trustees would wish 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 approximately equal to between 6 and 12 months' expenditure.

## Structure, Governance & Management

### *Nature of Governing Document*

The governing instrument of the 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, as noted above, 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.

### *Method adopted for appointing Trustees (Provincial Leadership Team)*

The Province 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 and 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 with regard to 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 consultants, 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 Charity under the direction of the Provincial Leader and her Team. The majority of the income of the Charity comes from members' 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.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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### *Collaboration and Partnership*

It is the policy of the Sisters of Mercy to work in partnership and collaboration with their ministry colleagues, statutory and voluntary bodies, other religious congregations, parish and diocesan groups in serving the local and wider community. In some instances members are employed by these organisations, whilst in other cases they work as volunteers.

The Charity is a member of AMRI.



The Association of Leaders of Religious and Missionaries of Ireland represents Religious Congregations, Societies of Apostolic Life and Lay Missionary groups. AMRI is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. Overall responsibility rests with an executive council which is elected by the members. It is funded by the contributions of the member organisations, a basic amount is paid by each Congregation and then each group pays the remaining contribution on a per capita basis. AMRI promotes the common interests of the member organisations and supports their leaders in responding to the challenges of the time.

### *Risk Management*

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

- ◆ Governance and Management
- ◆ Financial
- ◆ Operational

### *Governance and Management Risks are revealed in:*

#### 1. Lack of decisive direction, strategy and forward planning

##### The steps taken to mitigate the risk:

- Chapter Statement which inspires and directs the Strategic Plan is reviewed
- Trustees are updated on the Charities Governance Code
- Budgets/financial plans are created
- A financial plan (budget) is prepared every year. This is reviewed and agreed by the Trustees
- Actual performance is compared against budget
- Variances are investigated
- Financial and operational performance is monitored in light of the purpose of the Charity

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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### 2. Lack of relevant skills

#### The steps taken to mitigate the risk:

- Induction is provided for new Trustees
- Trustees attend formal training courses on the duties of Trustees
- Trustees seek guidance and advice from their legal, investment and property advisors as required

### *Financial Risks are revealed in:*

#### 1. **Poor Investment Performance**

The Trustees consider variability of investment returns on the investment funds to constitute the Charity's major financial risk.

#### The steps taken to mitigate the risk:

- The appointment of an investment advisor who has worked with the Trustees on an investment strategy / investment objectives that consider diversity, prudence and liquidity criteria
- The investment objectives are considered on an ongoing basis
- Investment reports are received and reviewed by the Trustees/Finance Group at the end of each quarter
- An Investment Policy is in place

#### 2. **Budgetary Control and Financial Reporting**

#### The steps taken to mitigate the risk:

- Budgets are linked with the objectives of the Charity and are reviewed at the end of each quarter with the Finance Group and the Financial Advisor
- The Trustees/Finance Group together with the Finance Advisor ensure that the necessary skills are available to produce and interpret financial reports on a quarterly basis
- Cash flow variances are reviewed and explained at the quarterly Finance Meetings treasury management
- Cash flow planning is a key component of the quarterly Finance Meetings

#### 3. **Fraud or Error**

#### The steps taken to mitigate the risk:

- Policies and procedures are outlined in the Finance Handbook
- Financial control procedures are reviewed
- Duties are segregated

### *Operational Risks are revealed in:*

#### **New Initiatives**

#### The steps taken to mitigate the risk:

- All projects are appraised, budgeted for and costed
- Are authorised by the Charity
- Have expenditure limits

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

*FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021*

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### **Disaster Recovery and Planning**

#### **The steps taken to mitigate the risk:**

- Computer back-ups are carried out on a daily basis and disks are held offsite
- Annual insurance renewal meetings are held to review insurable risks

### **Procedural and Systems Documentation**

#### **The steps taken to mitigate the risk:**

- Policies and Procedures are documented in the Financial Handbook
- The Financial Handbook is reviewed and updated

**Having assessed the major risks to which the Charity/Province is exposed, the Trustees believe that they have established effective systems to mitigate those risks.**

## **POLICIES**

The Trustees, in conjunction with the Congregational Leadership Team ensure that policies and good guidelines are developed, circulated and implemented and that these are regularly evaluated and updated. The trustees ensure compliance with all statutory requirements.



### **Safeguarding:**

Since the mid 1990's the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy has had a safeguarding policy in place, it has been reviewed regularly. The Policy aims to encourage adequate awareness and best practice 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 the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures for the Charity.

The Western Province prepared for and complied with the HSE Safeguarding Audit in 2014 and received a positive report.

The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy invited the National Board for the Safeguarding of Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) to audit their safeguarding policy and practice in June/July 2015. The overall response stated that 'the present child safeguarding structure as a whole, within the four Mercy Provinces, is contributed to by a dynamic, enthusiastic and hardworking team of personnel drawn from members within the Province and from those outside of the Congregation.

The professionalism, determination and knowledge of those involved is obvious and the existence of which gives a confidence and assurance that the structures in place will be further consolidated and continue to secure a "culture" of child safeguarding that is robust and accountable. The Congregation accepts in full its recommendations and welcomes the publication of the NBSCCCI Review. The Sisters of Mercy again sincerely apologizes to individuals who have suffered abuse and/or the betrayal of trust by some of our members in past years and continue to uphold the primary importance of safeguarding children.

In April 2017 it was agreed a Mercy Congregation Safeguarding Coordinating Team would be established. The main purpose of this group would be to co-ordinate practice and ensure consistency throughout the Provinces. A number of meetings were held during the year. The Safeguarding Manager and Provincial Link in the Western Province attend these meetings.



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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### 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)*

Members of the Province are committed to a lifestyle reflecting the fact that all possessions are held in trust for the mission of the Congregation. As property trustees the aim is to promote the mission of the Province, addressing members' 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.

### *Properties are currently held in one or other of the following Property Trustee Companies:*

Sisters of Mercy (Western Province) CLG

The Convent of Mercy (Ardagh and Clonmacnoise Diocese) CLG

The Convent of Mercy Trustees Galway CLG

The Convent of Mercy Trustees Moate CLG As there were no properties in this company, it was formally dissolved in April 2021.

### **Movement of Properties During 2021**

The Trustees agreed to the following transactions:

#### **On the Market**

##### **Sale Agreed**

Beech Haven, Church Street, Ballinasloe

##### **Sales Completed**

Tabor, Circular Road, Swinford, Co. Mayo

Land and site at Carna, Co. Galway

Site at Curryline, Newtownforbes, Co. Longford

##### **Surrendered**

Convent, Spiddal, Co. Galway

##### **Transferred to us**

Sliver of land and portion of footpath at Claremorris, Co. Mayo

### **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.



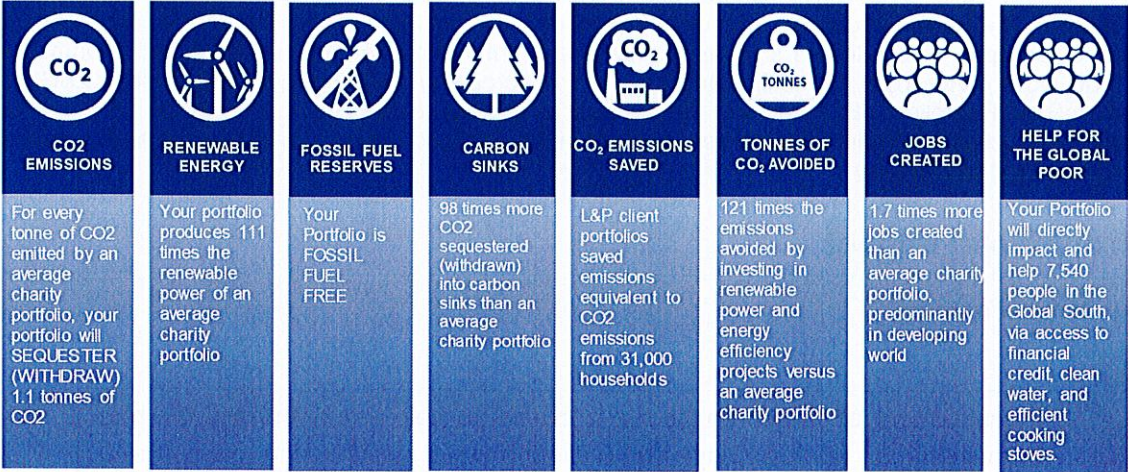
# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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

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

## 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 (CO<sub>2</sub>) 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) -4,090 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e from the atmosphere per annum while an unscreened portfolio of the same size would produce c. 4,383 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. 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.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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

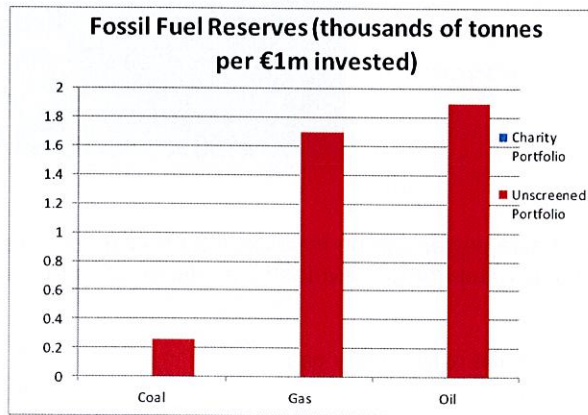


Chart showing the Charity's Investment Portfolio holds no fossil fuel reserves (no blue bar)

### 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.

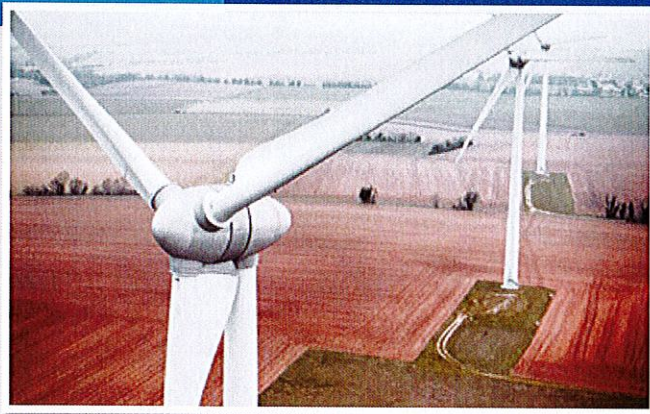
Given the importance of promoting renewable energy sources to address climate change, any investor interested in impact investing generally seeks a high level of renewable power output from their investment portfolio.

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:

#### 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



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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### 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 CO<sub>2</sub> 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 CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) it replaces. In 2021, the Portfolio avoided the release of almost 18,373 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. This is equivalent to:

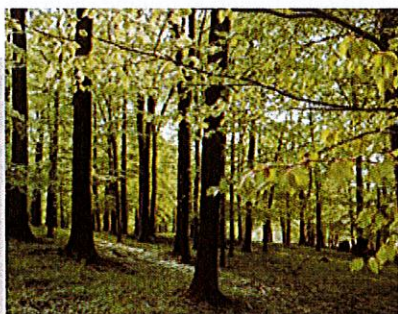
- Removing 3,968 cars from the roads every year
- 42,257 barrels of oil saved
- 15,304 acres of pine forest absorbing CO<sub>2</sub> for one year
- 2,021 round trips around the world by one typical passenger car (travelling at the equator).

In terms of renewable energy produced, the Portfolio produced 16,619 MWh in 2021, enough energy to power approx. 19,084 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:

- 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.*

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

### 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 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 47 new jobs, while the Portfolio helped create around 81 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



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

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### *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:

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

## Future Plans

The Provincial Leader and Team will continue to give attention to its governance responsibilities as Trustees of the Charity. They will review its needs and spending plans and make every effort to manage its existing assets as efficiently as possible in order to generate the income necessary to achieve the Charity's aims. Nevertheless, insofar as possible, the Charity plans to give ongoing support to the various works of the Province, to its members, colleagues and collaborators in ministry.

The Trustees of the Charity will continue with the transfer of Voluntary Secondary School Properties to The *Educena* Foundation and the transfer of Primary Schools to the relevant Diocesan authorities. They will establish the best way forward for involvement in the Community Schools. Time and monies will be involved in finalising the transfer of the remaining school properties to both the *Educena* Foundation and the Catholic Church patrons. The Province will continue to give ongoing support to the new Trust Bodies.

There will be continuing commitment to the ongoing care of all the members of the Province. Concern for the frail elderly members will necessitate the ongoing review of community houses and the assessment of their suitability for ageing communities. We will continue to engage with Management Companies in the ongoing provision of care in the communities. Where necessary, nursing home care will be accessed for those who need it.

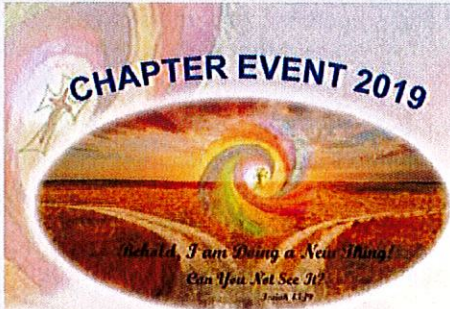
The members of the Province, older and younger, are the mainstay of the Charity. They are its chief agents as well as the source of the funding available to meet its obligations. Devising and monitoring adequate systems to support life in the communities is an ongoing consideration and challenge in a time of unprecedented change in our demographics.

Chapter 2019 set the directives for the Province for the coming six years.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021



**CHAPTER EVENT 2019**

*Behold, I am doing a new thing!  
Can you not see it?*

**WESTERN PROVINCE**

*Faithful to the call of our Congregational Chapter (2018) and believing that fidelity to this call will be transformative for us and the world...*

**Vision**  
We nurture and support contemplative living by

- ◆ allowing ourselves to be open to the mystery of God in all of life
- ◆ deepening our understanding of creation-centred spirituality
- ◆ committing to times of silence and deep listening in prayer
- ◆ sharing our faith journey

**Charism**  
Recognizing that God's Mercy is the wellspring from which our charism flows we will

- ◆ Immerse ourselves in the life and spirit of Catherine McAuley
- ◆ value and nurture the charism
- ◆ share our Mercy story with its light and shadow

**Leadership**  
In the light of impending changes to our Congregational structures we will

- ◆ develop and enliven our cluster system
- ◆ embrace the transition to lay leadership and lay management

**Care and Wellbeing**  
Aware that the care and wellbeing needs within our Province are constantly evolving we will

- ◆ provide professional healthcare co-ordination at Province level
- ◆ continually review and upgrade support systems
- ◆ ensure that those with specific roles in this ministry are adequately resourced and supported

**Mission**  
We continue to respond compassionately to the critical issues of today - the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. We commit anew to

- ◆ live in ecologically friendly ways
- ◆ promote care of the earth among ourselves, our co-workers and with the wider community
- ◆ respond to the needs of homeless people, asylum seekers and the disempowered, especially women, by sharing our resources with them and engaging in advocacy and lobbying on their behalf.

In all our endeavours we work in partnership with other relevant agencies and bodies.

A six year plan has been drawn up to enable the fulfilment of the directives. This plan is reviewed and updated quarterly.

## Appendix 1

### Childcare: Solidarity with and support for former residents of Industrial Schools

The Sisters of Mercy have been engaged in childcare since the opening of the House of Mercy in Baggot Street 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 their direct care. Many young people and adults continue to maintain strong bonds of friendship with the Sisters who support them on life's journey and advocate for them when the need arises. This connection with past residents continues through visits, phone calls, attendance at birthday celebrations, weddings and many other social occasions as well as other interactions in the daily events of life.

The findings of the Commission to inquire into Child Abuse evoked a very generous response from the Sisters of Mercy. 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. 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. The services of the Congregational archivist and her staff have been available free of charge to past residents of Mercy institutions who seek their records. A counsellor was employed specifically to meet with those approaching the service in their search for records and she still works part-time with the service.

The Western Province contributed €1,003,942.88 to *Faoiseamh* between 1996 and 2011. *Towards Healing* replaced *Faoiseamh* in 2011. The Western Province contributes to the funding of *Towards Healing* in continuation of support for survivors of Clerical and Religious abuse. To date the Western Province has contributed €324,122.00 to *Towards Healing*.

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

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The Congregation contributed a total of €33,091,114 in property and finance to the 2002 Redress Scheme. The Western Province contributed €1,695,013.00 in cash and properties to the value of €6,685,137.00. It has taken a long time to complete the legal work of transferring some properties and all transfers are now completed.

Following the CICA Report of 2009 the Congregation pledged a voluntary contribution of €20 million in cash as well as property then valued at €11.5 million, to the Statutory Fund which was set up to help those who had complained of abuse in industrial schools. In addition, the Provinces offered to the State properties which were valued at €80,856,800 and to the voluntary sector properties valued at €15,060,000.

The Western Province contribution of €5,000,000.00 together with accrued interest of €78,088.93 was given to the fund.

Two school properties valued at €4,706,800.00 are in the process of being handed over to DES. Other properties were sold and proceeds donated to the Statutory Fund. To date €1,679,258.60 has been donated.

Four properties valued at €2,175,000.00 have been given free of charge to the Voluntary sector.

A valuable property in Galway has been transferred to COPE and a further one pledged to the State has yet to be completed.

The resources of the Congregation which are in the trusteeship of the Provinces are the product of the voluntary commitment and labour of individual Sisters who served their local communities over the past 170 years. Throughout the Congregation's history, the Sisters numbering more than 12,780, have donated all of their resources, including salaries, towards the mission of our Congregation and it is this voluntary giving which has enabled all of its endeavours. Their salaries and stipends also contributed to the purchasing of the properties which were sold in order that they could make these large cash donations.

### **In 2014 the Charity contributed:**

€88,500.00 to *Towards Healing*

€2,000.00 to *Towards Peace*.

€25,000.00 was paid to support families.

Additional Information:

### **2015**

Two properties were sold and €329,000 was transferred to DES.

The Charity contributed €67,179 to *Towards Healing* and €21,380 was paid to support families. €20,000 was paid for the purchase of freehold (Redress Expense).

### **2016**

To date €2,008,258.60 has been donated.

The Charity contributed €62,109 to *Towards Healing* and €15,000 was paid to support families of former residents. The counsellor appointed to work with former residents finished. However the Congregational archivist continues to deal with all enquiries and meets with former residents as necessary.

### **2017**

The Charity contributed €53,231 to *Towards Healing* and €14,000 was paid to support families of former residents.



# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

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### 2018

As part of the voluntary contribution following the Ryan Report, the Charity

1. Transferred the Primary and Secondary Schools in Ennistymon to DES as a sit for a new Community School
2. Seamount College and Secondary School, Kinvara was transferred to DES for the Secondary School under the trusteeship of the Galway Diocese
3. Transferred €37,637 to DES – the proceeds from sale of land in Ballinrobe, less fees.

The Charity paid €650,000 to DES as part of the Redress Scheme.

The Charity contributed €70,000 to *Towards Healing*.

€41,000 was paid to support families of former residents.

### **Financial Support**

#### **In 2019**

As part of the Voluntary Contribution following the Ryan Report, the Charity donated Lenaboy Castle plus 0.97 acres of land to Galway City Council as an Arts and Culture Centre for young people. In 2019 a further €750,000 was transferred to Galway City Council for the refurbishment of the building. €700,000 of this amount had been awarded to Mercy Sisters Western Province in a court case with the HSE. In addition, the Sisters granted €50,000 towards this project.

€70,000.00 was contributed to the counselling service *Towards Healing*

€33,835 was paid to support families of former residents

€31,200 was paid to the Safeguarding Manager

#### **In 2020**

€40,000.00 was contributed to the counselling service *Towards Healing*

€19,030 paid to support families of former residents

€31,200 was paid to the Safeguarding Manager



### **Post Balance Sheet Event**

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

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

**Sr Breege O'Neill**  
Trustee

**Sr Margaret Casey**  
Trustee

Dated: 10 October 2022.

Dated: 10 October 2022

# CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY WESTERN PROVINCE

## STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

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The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland".

The law applicable to charities in Ireland requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the income and expenditure of the charity for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping sufficient accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2009 and the provisions of the trust deed. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

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

**Sr Breege O'Neill**  
Trustee

**Dated: 10 October 2022**

**Sr Margaret Casey**  
Trustee

**Dated:10 October 2022**