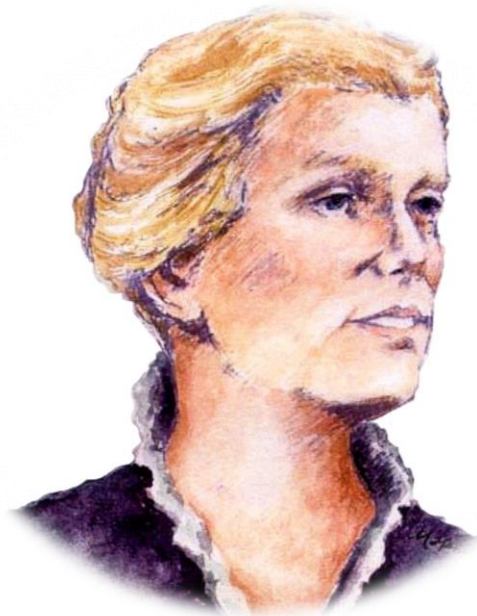


*Congregation of the  
Sisters of Mercy  
Southern Province*



*Annual Trustee Report &  
Financial Statement  
2022*

# *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province*

## *Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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

# *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province*

## *Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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### **Statement of Trustees (Provincial Team) Responsibilities**

The Provincial Leader and the Provincial Leadership Team (Trustees) are required to prepare financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the province and of the income and application of resources for that year.

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

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently.
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- state whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.
- state whether the Charities SORP (FRS 102) has been followed.
- prepare financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that this basis applies.

The Provincial Leader and the Provincial Leadership Team are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with statutory requirements and enable financial statements to be audited. 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.

Approved on behalf of the Trustees:

September 2023

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Sr. Eileen O'Flynn  
Provincial Leader

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Sr. Brid Biggane  
Provincial Leadership Team Member

# *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province*

## *Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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### **Reference & Administrative Details**

Name of Charity:	Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province
Charity Number:	CHY 1690 (Revenue Commissioners) 20002459 (Charities Regulatory Authority)
Address of Principal Office:	Mercy Stewardship Office Bishop Street, Cork City
Trustees:	Sr. Eileen O'Flynn (Provincial Leader) Sr. Nora Anne Lombard Sr. Anna Mai Middleton Sr. Brid Biggane Sr. Julianne Sullivan
Provincial Treasurer:	Sr. Ann Lenihan
Independent Auditors:	Walsh O'Brien Harnett Chartered Accountants and Statutory Audit Firm 104 Baggot Street Lower Dublin 2
Principal Bankers:	Bank of Ireland 32 South Mall, Cork
Investment Managers:	L&P Investment Services Limited 2/3 Terminus Mills Clonskeagh Road, Dublin 6
Solicitors:	Barry C Galvin & Son Solicitors 91 South Mall, Cork
Financial Advisors:	L&P Trustee Services Limited 2/3 Terminus Mills Clonskeagh Road, Dublin 6

# *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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## **Beginnings and Mission Today**

The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy 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, motivated by her Christian faith, used all her unexpected inheritance to alleviate poverty and disadvantage in her native city. She invested all her money in setting up a house on Baggott Street as a centre of education and shelter for poor girls and young women. Soon other wealthy young women, fired by the same ideals of love of God and care of the disadvantaged, joined her. From the beginning Catherine & her companions saw the necessity of providing basic education as a way of enabling people to improve their lives. In the years that followed they also recognized and responded to the need to provide healthcare. Consequently, schools and hospitals were established.



In recent generations and as state provision in the areas of healthcare and education continued to improve, the work of the sisters became more varied. Motivated by the Christian vision of a world of equality, justice, peace and care of the earth there has been a consistent effort to respond to unmet needs, to work for justice and to advocate for the voiceless. Sisters are consciously committed to eco-justice, through raising awareness and through working with others, to restore people's relationship with the earth. Through this work we aim to redress the injustices affecting those most impoverished by the destruction of the earth's natural systems.

Efforts to support access to education for children, young people and adults have continued. Sisters are involved in various facets of the healing ministry. Pioneering work has been done in addressing addiction, the needs of refugees and asylum seekers and a sister was a founding member of MECPATHS (Mercy Efforts for Child Protection against Trafficking in the Hospitality and Services Sectors) a social justice response to the prevalence of human trafficking and the exploitation of people in Ireland. Many continue to be involved in promoting spirituality. Today, due to the age profile of the sisters the need to care for the aged and frail members has become a necessity.

# *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province*

## *Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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### **How We Organise Ourselves Today**

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 purpose of this union was to ensure greater effectiveness in the mission of Mercy.

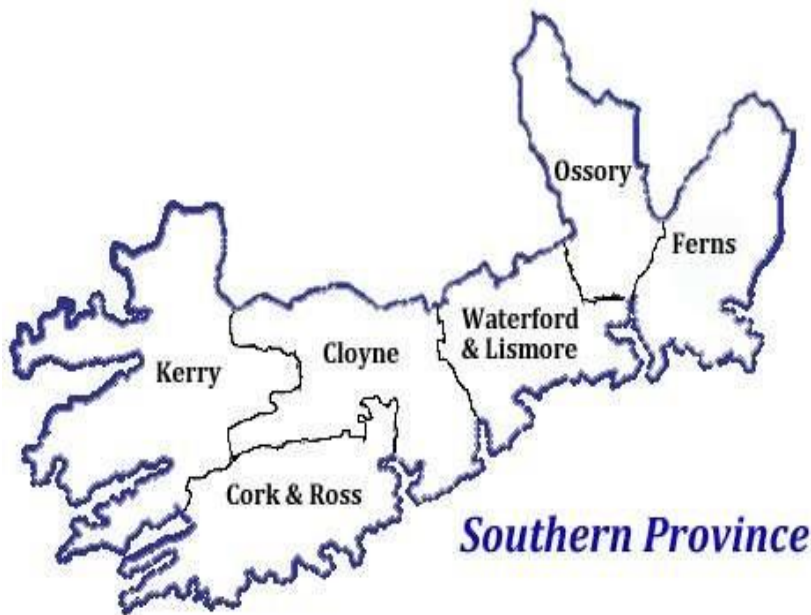
For administrative purposes (canonical and civil) the amalgamated Congregation structurally comprises six Provinces – four in Ireland and three overseas in Kenya, South Africa and there is a smaller group (a Region) of the Congregation in the United States. Each Irish province is recognised in civil law as an unincorporated association with its own Charity number from the Irish Revenue Commissioners.

### **Southern Province**



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

### **Geographical Location**

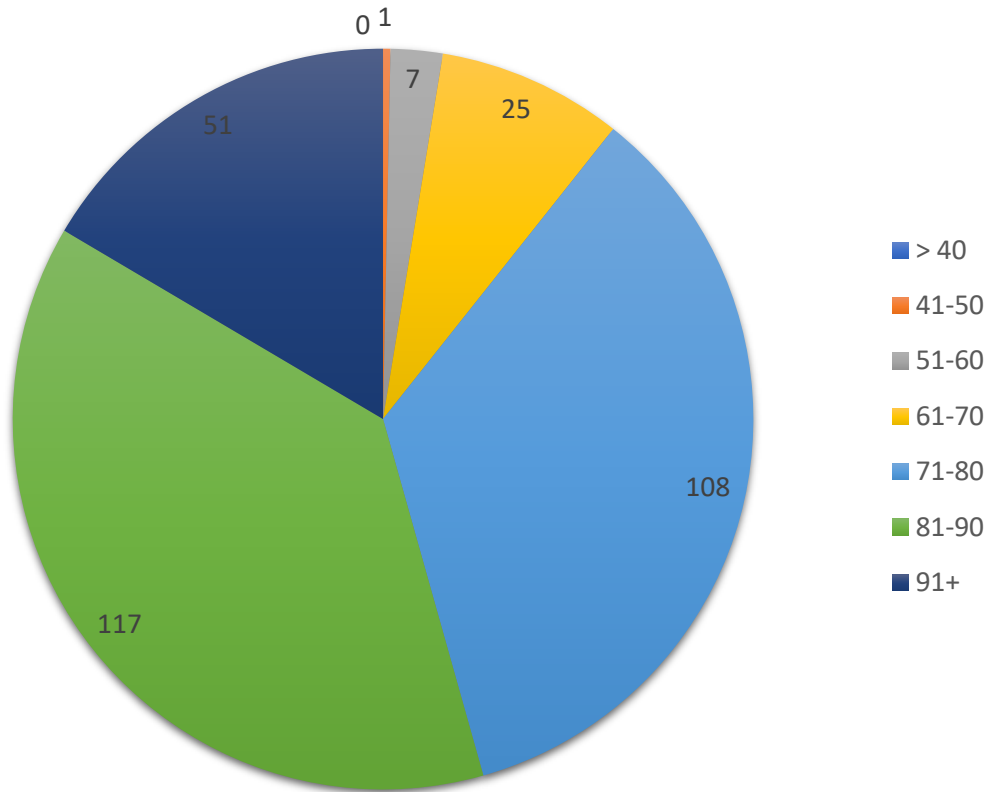


*Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province  
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**Membership on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 = 309**

**Age Profile**



**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)*



# *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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## **Objects of the Charity**

The main objects of the Charity are:

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

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

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





# Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province Annual Trustee Report 2022

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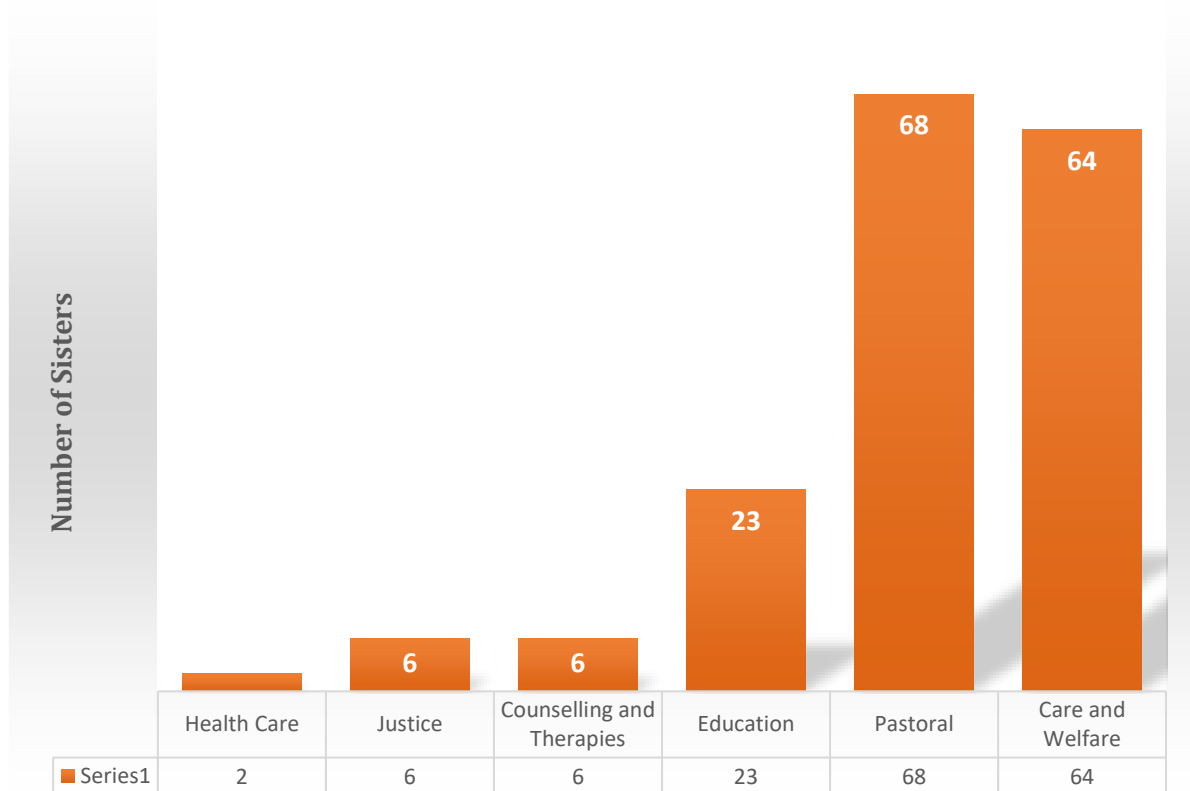
## Public Benefit

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

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

The beneficiaries are people of the Republic of Ireland and of other parts of the world through our response to needs in developing countries.

## Number of Sisters in Ministry 2022



## *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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

All members of the Charity are committed to the ministry of prayer, both personal and communal.

### ***Activities of the Charity***

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#### ***A. Congregational Living and the Advancement of Religion***

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The Advancement of Religion is of prime importance to the Trustees and to the sisters in the province. All aspects of the Charity's work involve the advancement of religion.

Sisters in the province are committed to daily personal prayer and in addition, each group determines the form of communal prayer that best suits it.

Some groups are closely linked to their local parishes and all, who are able, participate in reflective processes provided by the Congregation and other faith-based communities e.g. diocesan offices, justice groups, formation groups and AMRI

Sisters in receipt of salaries, stipends or pensions donate them to the Charity and therefore have no independent means of support. They have devoted all their lives and their earnings to the furtherance of the Charity's objectives. Many also give their services free in their various ministries and continue to do so well beyond retirement age. The work of the Charity includes both the upkeep of the members and their upskilling so that they will be able to continue in their service to the public.

The Trustees considered the age profile of the members of the province and the impact of this on the work of the Charity, property requirements and financial implications. Accommodation is kept under review to ensure a continuum of care as appropriate to each sister's needs.

## *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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

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

The following are a few examples of ministries undertaken by the Charity in 2022:

### **Faith Development/Parish and Prayer Ministry**

Apart from their own prayer life, many sisters, even in retirement, actively contribute to the promotion of spirituality in various ways. A sample of their work is:

-  Adult Faith Development
-  Sacramental Preparation
-  Funeral Ministry
-  Spiritual Accompaniment
-  Parish Liturgy
-  Parish Pastoral Council Member

# Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province Annual Trustee Report 2022

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## Circles Of Mercy



To “*explore the creation of a wider Mercy family*” the Circle of Mercy was set up in 2005. It is the coming together of compassionate people from different walks of life who, with Sisters of Mercy, wish to live the gospel according to the spirit of Catherine McAuley.

Its aim is to enable one another to come closer to God, to deepen our understanding of an integrated spirituality, to grow in compassion to respond with loving kindness to the needs around us.

Circles of Mercy meet in Charleville, Mallow, Blarney, Skibbereen and Clonakilty. Members come from local parish communities. They have a strong connection with Catherine McAuley and the Mercy Charism and express this in their daily lives. One or two sisters link with the groups in each area and in all there are about 40 members. In 2022 some Circles resumed meetings in person while others still chose to remain in touch by phone. In Peru one sister facilitates a Catherine McAuley group. They study and share the story of Catherine as well as visiting the sick and giving assistance in emergencies.



**Blarney Circle of Mercy**

## *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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### **Encountering Mercy**

Encountering Mercy members had regular meetings via Zoom and in person throughout 2022. Each meeting usually consists of a reflection prepared by one of the members, quiet time for prayer and sharing. In addition, they deepen their awareness of the call to receive and give mercy in their daily lives. Many of the members are young people who lead very busy lives in school and in hospital. Connecting with like-minded individuals for prayer time/reflection is a way to sustain their lives and activities of service. Encountering Mercy was coordinated in 2022 by two members of staff in Mercy University Hospital, Cork

*“The tender Mercy of God has given us one another” Catherine McAuley*

---

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

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The aims of the Trustees in 2022 are summarised as:

- To respond with care and compassion to issues of social injustice in collaboration with others.
- To ensure that the sisters receive the appropriate level of care.
- To maintain community houses, assessing their suitability for an ageing membership.

## *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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Catherine McAuley generated in her sisters a deep concern and compassionate care for the sick and dying. Today, over 180 years later, wellbeing activities, healthcare, care of the dying and the bereaved still engage many of the members of the Charity. They are involved in this work in community care and within the community houses. Sisters re-trained in chaplaincy and complementary therapies to work in a variety of settings to promote the wellbeing of people and contribute to the alleviation of stress in our society. A sister serves as a director on a hospital board, another serves as a director on the board of a nursing home and some are patient advocates in nursing homes. Sisters do not receive remuneration for this work.

With the increasing age profile - 90% of our members were over 70 at the end of 2022 - needs have become more acute. It has meant adapting existing houses to become assisted living houses and, in some cases, new buildings have been required. Assisted living is offered in: Killarney, Clonakilty, Charleville, Kinsale, Mallow, Cork City, Dungarvan, Carrick-on-Suir, Waterford and Wexford. It has also meant frequently securing residential care in nursing homes for members. Facilities Management Companies are employed in our assisted living houses to oversee care, catering, cleaning and maintenance.

### **Ministry of Visitation to Nursing Homes**

*I visit four nursing homes: St. Martha's in Charleville and The Windmill Nursing Home in Churchtown, on average three – four visits a fortnight. I also visit The Catherine Mc. Auley Home in Limerick and Nazareth House in Mallow but not as frequently as the other two.*

*In both Charleville and Churchtown I enjoy chatting to the patients and play music, recite poems i.e. poems they learned at school, and I bring artefacts from the Heritage Centre to them. Many memories are triggered from these great conversation pieces and we ramble many miles down Memory Lane together. They love music and often join in singing the old songs.*

## *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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*Though many of the patients have memory loss of some form, others like to share their anxieties and ask for prayers for themselves or their families.*

*I find this voluntary ministry very fulfilling and feel privileged to be engaged in it.*

*Bernadette Maria Knopek RSM*

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

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

The Sisters of Mercy aim to honour that commitment to the best of their ability. In 2022 118 sisters engaged in the Charity’s commitment to the relief of poverty, promotion of education, justice and other charitable activities through ministries related to the following:

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

#### **1. Promotion of Education**

Provision of education and access to education has always been central to the work of the Charity. From the late 19th century onwards the Mercy Sisters established second-level

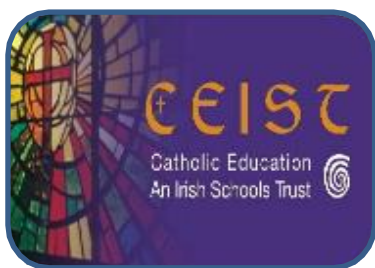
## *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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schools, including boarding schools, in most provincial towns thereby enabling children from rural Ireland to receive an education.

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

### **(i) Voluntary and Secondary School Trusteeship:**



Catholic Education An Irish Schools Trust (CEIST)

In 2007 CEIST, which is now an independent entity, was set up to act as Trustees for Secondary Schools for the Sisters of Mercy in Ireland and for four other Religious Congregations. In 2022 CEIST celebrated 15 years in existence. Among the new initiatives in 2022 CEIST introduced certification for their schools Religious Education Junior Cycle Programs. Schools which participate means that learning in RE will be certified by the patron as part of each students Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) under "other areas of learning".

The EDUCENA foundation works with the CEIST Trust to enable the resourcing of the trusteeship of their schools and managing and optimizing the financial resources that will be needed in the future. The task of transferring the schools from the Sisters of



Mercy to EDUCENA continues to involve considerable work and expertise on the part of the trustees and their legal and property representatives.



*Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province  
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*Mount Mercy College, Cork – Transferred in 2022*

**(ii) Community Schools**

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

The Charity is Joint Trustee of five Community Schools and one Community College - Kinsale, Béara, Blackwater, Skibbereen, Passage West Community Schools and Coláiste Dún Iascaigh Community College, Cahir. In 2022 the Charity contributed €10,104 towards the salary of the person appointed by CEIST as the Community Schools and Colleges Co-ordinator.

## *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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Blackwater Community College, Lismore, Co. Waterford

### **(iii) Eliza Dennehy Fund**

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

Over the years the money was invested by the sisters. Since the Convent of Mercy, Macroom closed this fund is administered by the Charity. In 2022 €91,550.00 was disbursed from the fund.

“Going back to education has been a daunting task which has been made much easier by the generosity that you have shown me”. (R.P. – A grateful student)

## *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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### **(iv) Primary Schools**

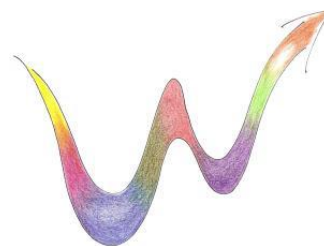
The trusteeship of the enterprise of education has been transferred to the relevant Dioceses and the trusteeship of the properties is in the process of being transferred. The Sisters of Mercy retain Trusteeship in St Maries of the Isle, Primary School, Cork City. Enrolment and staffing have increased dramatically and there are now four classes for children with Autism ASD.



The school population is multi-cultural and welcoming of all. At the end of 2022 the school number was 301 with pupils coming from more than 30 countries around the world.

### **(v) Welcome Immigrant Centre Ltd T/A Welcome English**

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



*Welcome English Centre* in Cork City was set up by the province in the year 2000 to respond to the growing numbers of asylum seekers and those with refugee status and their need to learn English. It was set up and coordinated by one of the sisters when she retired from teaching at post primary level. Priority on the courses is given to asylum seekers. Welcome Immigrant Centre CLG is a charity and is largely reliant on donations for funding the operating costs and is principally staffed by a team of volunteers.



## *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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The principal donors are the Sisters of Mercy who contributed €50,000 in 2022. In addition to this funding, the congregation also provides the premises where the services operate, together with the services of other support staff.

Students come from many countries (see table below).

### **Number of Students and Countries of Origin 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022**

<b>Country</b>	<b>No. of Students</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>No. of Students</b>
<b>Afghanistan</b>	10	<b>Moldova</b>	2
<b>Albania</b>	1	<b>Morocco</b>	1
<b>Algeria</b>	1	<b>Nepal</b>	1
<b>Argentina</b>	2	<b>Nigeria</b>	1
<b>Benin</b>	1	<b>Palestine</b>	1
<b>Brazil</b>	3	<b>Peru</b>	1
<b>China</b>	2	<b>Poland</b>	2
<b>Columbia</b>	1	<b>Romania</b>	1
<b>DRC Congo</b>	6	<b>Russia</b>	2
<b>Ecuador</b>	1	<b>Senegal</b>	1
<b>Egypt</b>	2	<b>Somalia</b>	1
<b>El Salvador</b>	1	<b>Sudan</b>	2
<b>Eritrea</b>	4	<b>Syria</b>	2
<b>Ethiopia</b>	1	<b>Turkey</b>	3
<b>Georgia</b>	2	<b>Ukraine</b>	<b>54 + 135 March - June 2022</b>
<b>Iraq</b>	1	<b>Yemen</b>	1
<b>Kurdistan</b>	1		
<b>Latvia</b>	1		
<b>Lithuania</b>	1		
<b>Summary:</b>			

## *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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Refugees	5 Students
Immigrants	9 Students
Asylum Seekers	8 Students
Migrant/Low Waged	6 Students
Family Reunification	29 Students
Temporary Protection	54 + 135 (March – June 2022)
Total Number of Students for the Year = 192	



### **2. Justice, Peace and Reconciliation**

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

The Charity is committed to raising awareness of the interdependence and interconnectedness of all of life. It aims to promote right relationships with all people and with all of life. Over the years, members of the province have endeavoured to alleviate suffering in all its forms. These members worked in schools, workhouses,

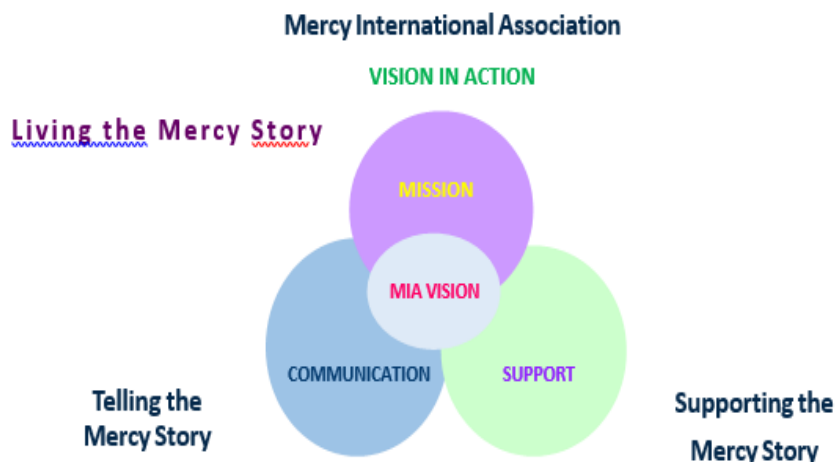
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orphanages and hospitals in co-operation with the Church and State. The works of the sisters today for justice, peace and reconciliation include:

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

## **(i) Mercy International Association**



Mercy International Association is an association of the leaders of Mercy Congregations, Institutes and Unions throughout the world. The Congregations are in Ireland, England,

America, Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland and the Philippines.

The leaders work together to share some aspects of the common work of the Congregation. Each Mercy group contributes financially.





# *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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## **Spring Equinox Celebration**

*Sustained by contemplative living,  
we remain open to Mystery  
expressed in our evolving Universe.  
Congregational Chapter 2018*



*Seeing the invitation to the Zoom meeting to celebrate the Spring Equinox for some reason took me back to Páirc a' Tobair and the Solstice Celebrations! That memory is one of being opened up to a new way of integrating the natural world, the cosmos and my small inner world. Once again as we gathered, this time on Zoom, to participate in the celebration of equal day, equal night (on March 21<sup>st</sup>) through poetry, songs and sharing, I felt connected to that ONENESS of 'the energy of the Spirit that courses through all of life'.*

*I feel so grateful for the opportunities offered by the Interconnectedness Group. Being introduced to The New Universe Story – 14.7 billion years - changed everything in my thinking. Seeing the world through my new lens made everything more exciting, more vibrant. That line in Acts 17:28, 'It is in God that we live and move and have our being' took on a new way of seeing that is both challenging and freeing. Challenging in that I realise the journey from the head to the heart is a struggle and the freeing bits are the moments where the line from the hymn Eagle's Wings 'Sometimes thru' me, sometimes in spite of me you seem to find your purpose in my life!' becomes real for me.*

*It is with deep gratitude and appreciation that I ponder on the gifts offered so generously by all involved in the Interconnectedness Group. Mile Buiochas!*

*Ann Lynch RSM*

*"We are part of God's continuing new creation, one substance with the rest of creation.*

*All of life, our life and every life, is a gift.*

*That's what love is about. God's love at the heart of the cosmos is a love that heals, makes whole and generates new life".*

*Ilia Delio*



## *Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Southern Province Annual Trustee Report 2022*

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### *From Little Acorns...*



*Lord of the harvest sending labourers to the harvest takes on a whole new meaning. Arus Muire sisters, Magdalen, Josephine and Mary Jo collecting sunflower and sweet pea seeds.*

There's a great awareness of climate change and the adverse impact it is having across the globe, to the extent that some feel we are well past the point of no return. Whatever the truth of such sentiments it is still possible and indeed valuable to do little things for the greater good. As the saying goes: "Large streams from little fountains flow, tall oaks from little acorns grow."

There's a lot of green space around Arus Muire – the relatively recently built new convent in Clonakilty. In response to a 2019 local initiative to plant 20,000 trees in the Clonakilty area, the decision was made to plant a few hundred or so on part of our green space. This delayed [due to *COVID*] project finally got under way in 2022. In the meantime, we have planted small areas with wildflower seed and put in a number of spring bulbs, and the possibility of enriching the site with a small pond is being considered – all in the hope of enhancing biodiversity. If you are thinking of putting in some flower seed, bulbs or potted plants, try to choose pollinator friendly ones. It could make a difference! *Margaret Twomey RSM*

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**Peru:** There is a substantial commitment to ecology by our members in Peru, especially in the schools. One member has a team who voluntarily set plants in their local areas.



She also provides training on the care of our earth and the use of its resources and organises different scientific projects on ecology.

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

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

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

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



**MECPATHS**  
MERCY EFFORTS FOR  
CHILD PROTECTION  
AGAINST TRAFFICKING  
WITH THE HOSPITALITY  
AND SERVICES SECTORS



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

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

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

The Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI) represents and promotes active collaboration between Religious Congregations, Societies of Apostolic Life and Lay Missionary Groups. It promotes the common interests of member organisations and supports their leaders in responding to the challenges of the time. It raises awareness and facilitates responses to current and emerging social justice issues.



It is funded by the contributions of the member organisations and overall responsibility rests with an executive council which is elected by the members. As a member organisation the Charity contributed €15,800 to AMRI in 2022

### **(V) Prison Ministry**

From the earliest days of the Congregation, sisters have been involved in prison work.

St Nicholas Trust (SNT) was set up in Cork in 2008 in response to the needs of relatives of people sentenced to prison in the form of a support group where people can come to talk in a *safe, confidential, non-judgmental environment* to others who have been through the same experience.



Since 2010 it has successfully run a Hospitality Service in Cork Prison Waiting Area on a voluntary basis. Two members of the Charity returned as volunteers post Covid-19. The service provides refreshments for families who are visiting the prison, colouring materials for children and limited advice and support where appropriate.

At a recent IPRT (Irish Penal Reform Trust) Conference it was highlighted yet again the gaps in the system where the needs of families of prisoners are ignored. At that Conference one speaker who as a teenager was a member of one of those families said: 'the family also do the time'. He was grieving the loss of his dad, the stigma of having a

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father in prison left him isolated and the shame was leading him ‘down the wrong path’. He emphasised the need for, and importance of, having a social worker or key contact person to support the family at such a traumatic time. He did not have any of that kind



of support. In his own words he said *“the person who created the safe space for me was the volunteer who made the tea/coffee at the prison waiting room – a kind lady who watched out for me”*.

Volunteers who create a friendly, non-judgemental presence at the waiting room make a huge difference to all who come. It is really appreciated, and some visitors are surprised that people would volunteer to be there for them.

*Ann Lynch RSM*

### **(3) Overseas Development and Support**

*“Belonging to the universal church, missionary in her very nature, we seek to incarnate the mercy of God, according to the limits of our resources, in missionary countries.”*

*(Mercy Constitutions, Par 45)*

#### **Peru:**

Peru has seven members working in the country, six Peruvian and one Irish. One member lives and ministers in Lima and six members live in Trujillo. The sisters in Peru work in 5 main areas:

- **Education:** Formal state education and projects
- **Social Services** - supporting people in prison, in the Mercy Free Legal Aid office and in childcare centres. Two of the sisters co-ordinate pastoral ministry in parishes: one in the Sierra (Mountains) and one in Trujillo.

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- **Justice** - providing a free legal aid service—obtaining birth certificates and ID documentation to assist people accessing social support schemes. The free legal aid enables people to receive fair sentences.
- **Health Services** - providing food and medicine for emergency cases and the provision of a Residential Addiction Treatment Centre. This centre (Sal Y Luz) is staffed and run by one sister and counsellors and other staff.
- **Care of Creation** – the sisters in Peru are engaged in ongoing promotion and awareness-raising on climate change and environmental care.



Sal Y Luz, Addiction Treatment  
Centre

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

### **India:**

In 2022 €2,090.00 was donated to the Hope Foundation.

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

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

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*"Thank you so much for your commitment to this fund which aims to support those who suffer serious human rights abuses and continue the vision of St. Oscar Romero".  
Caoimhe de Barra, CEO Trócaire*

*"I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you for your financial support. The tragic war in Ukraine continues ... Thanks to your generosity, people who have experienced this terrible war can receive the support they need".  
Father Vitaliy Podolan, O.M.I.*

**Property:**

In response to the appeals for accommodation for Ukrainians fleeing the war in their homeland the Charity donated a 6 bedroomed house in Clogheen, Co. Tipperary which is currently occupied by a Ukrainian family.



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## **Knitting for Africa:**

Knitting for Africa is a group of between fifteen and twenty women, including a member of the Charity, who come together in Wilton, Cork. They knit jumpers and crochet blankets for babies. These are distributed to Uganda, Somalia, Rwanda, Kenya, Congo, Tanzania, Panama, Chernobyl, Madagascar. They have also sent some to the Ukraine to aid families in the war-torn areas.



## **(4) Pastoral and Social Care and Development**

### **(i) Kanturk Mercy House**

A sister administers Kanturk Mercy House. The premises are owned by the Sisters of Mercy. The centre provides daily meals, social activities, outings and advice. It seeks to alleviate rural isolation and is a venue for delivery of health care and social activities. In 2022 an average of 300 dinners per week were cooked at the centre and delivered to people in Kanturk and district.



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### **(ii) Charleville Sheltered Housing Services:**

A sister acts as co-ordinator of Charleville Sheltered Housing Services which comprises approximately 30 single occupancy bungalows with a large Central Care Unit. The



project was set up on land formally owned by the Sisters of Mercy. Two sisters are directors on the board of the Child and Family Company CLG which employs 25 people. They run a creche, preschool and after school services.

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



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



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### **(iii) Buttevant Mercy Centre:**

In the 1980's the sisters in Buttevant purchased two houses for ministry. Presently the centre is rented to the HSE by the Sisters of Mercy. It is managed by a sister and is open five days a week. Meals are delivered and social activities take place, particularly for the elderly. The Centre also provides facilities for a Parent/Toddler Group



*Mercy Centre, Buttevant*

### **(iv) Volunteering with the Samaritans:**

*The Samaritan vision is that fewer people die by suicide. The Samaritans make it their mission to alleviate emotional distress and reduce the incidence of suicidal feelings and suicidal behaviours. Samaritans do this by:*

- *Being available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year, to provide emotional support*
- *Reaching out to high-risk groups and communities*
- *Working in partnership with other groups*
- *Raising public awareness*



*To become a fully trained Samaritan I began with an initial interview and induction day to learn what was involved in becoming a listening volunteer. I discovered my role involved a weekly commitment of three hours at the Samaritan centre. During those three hours I take phone calls from people in distress and who are finding life a challenge. Most of the time I listen, do what I can to support and encourage the caller or I may refer them to another agency when appropriate. My responsibilities also include being of support to my duty partner and, at the end of each duty, report to the Day Leader.*

*I find volunteering with the Samaritans very rewarding because we reach out to the most vulnerable and forgotten in our society. This work has also convinced me of the value of listening and the power it has to ease the burthen of life for the person at the other end of the phone. Kate Morris RSM*

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### **(v) Treatment Centres Established and Supported by the Province:**

Over the years, the Southern Province established Addiction Treatment Centres, including one for adolescents. They are Tabor Group (Tabor Lodge and Tabor Fellowship House, Aiséirí Cahir, Aislinn Kilkenny).



**TABOR GROUP**

While the Charity has established separate legal entities for these centres, it continues to provide the buildings at a nominal rent

#### **Tabor Group 2022 in a Snapshot**

- 698 phone calls made to Tabor Group in 2022
- Assessments:
  - 374 Offered
  - 323 Completed
- 227 Admissions (70% of Completed Assessments)
- 148 (65%) Clients Admitted to Tabor Lodge
- 79 (35%) Clients Admitted to Tabor Fellowship

#### **Sal y Luz del Mundo, Peru**



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

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



### **(vi) Mercy Ministry Fund**

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

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



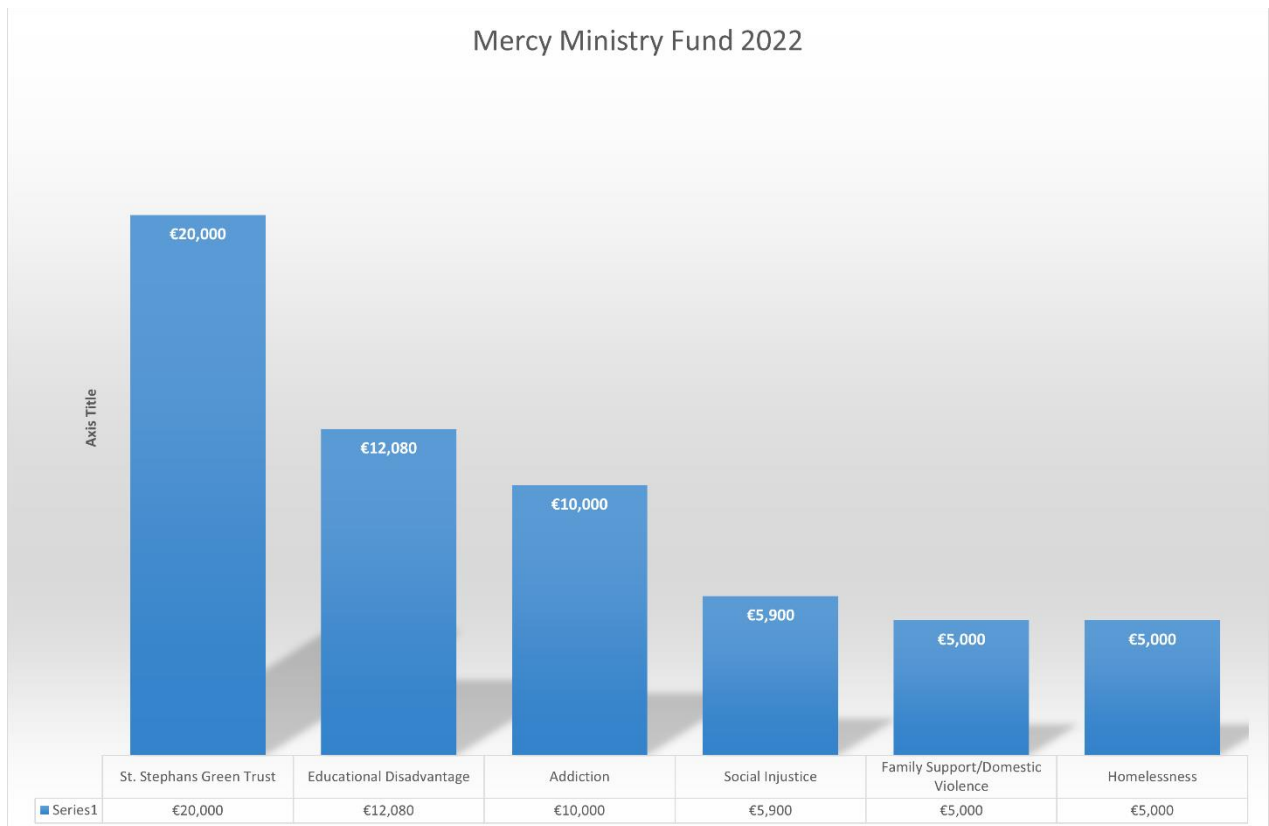
Stewardship personnel review the applications and make recommendations to the Trustees. The applications are assessed according to criteria set by the Trustees. The following is the breakdown of the contribution given and ratified by the Provincial Leadership Team/Trustees in 2022 according to categories:

### **Funding 2022 – Categories**

Educational Disadvantage	€12,080
Domestic Violence	€ 5,000
Addiction	€10,000
Homelessness	€ 5,000
Social&/or Ecological Injustice	€ 5,900
St Stephen's Green Trust	€20,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>€57,980</b>

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## Some Beneficiaries in 2022

### *(a) Amber Womens Refuge, Kilkenny*



Amber Women’s Refuge has been supporting and protecting women and children for over 20 years. It provides emergency refuge accommodation and a 24hr helpline offering compassionate, non-judgmental support and information to women and children in Kilkenny and Carlow who are victims of domestic violence and abuse.

“I was a broken woman when I first came to Amber.....I am still learning to see past this and know it will take time to heal”. *A client*

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### *(b) Women Supporting Women, Cork*

This project has been active for almost ten years in setting up and supporting a mentoring programme, aimed specifically at women parenting alone.



Mentoring is a supportive relationship between

two women, one of whom has more life experience than the other. Mentors are mature women open to working alongside mothers as mentors and advisors, who themselves are open to developing new skills in their lives and that of their communities.

The project is the outcome of local voluntary groups of women coming together, sharing a philosophy of anti-poverty work and community empowerment. A team of community women have undergone training in providing one to one support for parents.

*"I loved the family learning side of the course – I never thought that I was my child's first teacher...."*

*A Young Mother*

### *(c) Mitchelstown Youth Project Cloyne Diocesan Youth Services*

Mitchelstown Youth Project targets & supports young people aged 7-24, who are isolated and marginalised. Families on low income are also supported by working in conjunction with food cloud and food boxes are delivered on a weekly basis to 5 local families and excess food is given to the Ukrainian community and Direct Provision Centre in Mitchelstown, Co.Cork

*"Money requested from the Mercy Ministry Fund was used to help us with summer projects & trips for the young people".*

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“My favourite trip was at Christmas. It really made Christmas special”.  
*(Aoibheann, 14)*



“The youth project has helped me become more confident and allowed me to be with my friends outside of school.” *(Ciara, 15)*



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**Helping Hand, Waterford**

Helping Hand Waterford provides meals, beverages, food hampers, tents and sleeping bags, to homeless and vulnerable men, women and families.



**Peter McVerry Trust**

Since September 2020, Peter McVerry Trust has been delivering social housing in Killarney in partnership with Kerry County Council. The 15 apartments in this development provide homes for over 30 people on the local housing list.



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## Mallow Search and Rescue

Mallow search and rescue is a voluntary organisation based in Mallow, Co. Cork. It was founded in 1983 and its volunteers are involved in water based missing persons



searches, as well as escort boats for water - based events. They have been working in conjunction with their colleagues in the missing persons association since 2001 and currently have over thirty members, ranging from ten divers, fifteen boat handlers to support personnel.



## (vii) Wellsprings

Wellsprings/Huruma Ltd is both a residential and outreach centre in Cork City. Opened in 1995, it began by providing accommodation and counselling support for homeless young women who usually present with multiple and complex needs. In 2006 an outreach service was established offering lifelong support to women who engage with Wellsprings. Both buildings are provided by the Charity rent-free. Sisters also serve on the Board of Management.



**Bethany Outreach Service**



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### **Solidarity with and Support for Former Residents of Mercy Managed Institutions**

The Sisters of Mercy have been engaged in the care of vulnerable young people since the beginning of the Congregation in 1827. This involvement continued through the years in more formal settings such as in orphanages, industrial schools, group homes. Many young people maintained contact and friendship with Sisters who had been their carers in childhood and members in turn provided informal after care services and supports.



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 by and expanded by CORI the following year and operated as “Faoiseamh” until 2011.

Then it was replaced by *Towards Healing* a One Church service financed jointly by AMRI and the Irish Bishops Conference for former residents and their families.

In 2022 the Charity contributed €20,000 to enable a healing response through *Towards Healing*.

The services of the congregational and provincial archivists and their staff as well as the services of provincial administration staff are constantly available to past residents of our institutions who seek their records.

The Congregation contributed a total of €33,091,114 in property and finance to the 2002 Redress Scheme. It has taken a long time to complete the legal work of transferring some properties and one property still remains.

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

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

### **(viii) Safeguarding Policies and Procedures**

#### **Safeguarding Children**



The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy have adopted the Policy and Guidance of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI). In keeping with the

legal requirements of the Children First Act, 2017, and TUSLA, the Child Safeguarding Statement of the Sisters of Mercy is displayed on the Congregational website. In 2019 the Congregational Leadership Team (CLT), with the Mercy Provinces, adopted and disseminated the Congregational International Child Safeguarding Policy and Standards, it is based upon the NBSCCCI Policy and Standards 'Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016' and has been approved by the National Board. The 2022 Audit was completed in November 2022 showing 100% return from the province. Covid 19 restrictions caused almost all ministry with children to cease.

#### **Safeguarding Adults**

The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy is revising (still in draft form) the Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons Policy. The policy applies to all sisters in the four Irish provinces of the Congregation, resident in the republic and to employees and

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volunteers in our places of residence and ministry. The Provincial Leadership Team, cluster leaders and safeguarding representatives attended a safeguarding adults training session in September 2022. The safeguarding manager followed up by visiting each cluster to give input on the draft policy.

All staff working for the Charity are vetted and comply with the safeguarding policy of the relevant company which is in line with that of the Sisters of Mercy.

In 2022 ministry with adults was included in the Audit. 77 sisters undertake direct Mercy ministry with adults. Most of the ministry relates to care of our own members. 51 sisters are involved in external ministry with adults.

### **Safeguarding Meetings**

The Charity has a robust safeguarding structure in place. The safeguarding office is overseen by the safeguarding manager who is the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and administrative support is available. The role of the safeguarding manager is to develop and oversee the implementation of safeguarding practices for the Southern Province and liaise with statutory authorities. The safeguarding committee met four times in 2022. All meetings, except the final one, were held via Zoom. The purpose of their meetings is to review and support the work of the safeguarding office and the committee is accountable to the provincial leader. The safeguarding manager attended 10 meetings, by zoom, with the safeguarding managers of the other Irish provinces.

### **The Safeguarding Strategic Plan 2020-2022**

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

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

The safeguarding committee monitors the implementation of the Safeguarding Strategic Plan. The Plan forms and helps guide the development of safeguarding practice in

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relation to safeguarding children and vulnerable persons. In addition, the completion of the Annual Safeguarding Audit assists with the evaluation of the process within the Charity. Sadly, due to Covid 19, the Audits for 2022 showed many ministries which had to be suspended in 2020 had not been taken up again. The Training Plan for 2022 did not require training for sisters regarding children. Information and training sessions relating to adults were the focus for 2022. The safeguarding manager and deputy DLP attended role related training during 2022.

### **Safeguarding Communication**

The Trustees recognise the importance of ensuring that sisters and staff are kept informed of best practice and developments in relation to safeguarding. Safeguarding information and updates were provided through our Province Newsletter - "Province Life", through a dedicated Safeguarding Newsletter and at meetings with cluster leaders during 2022

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## ***C. Heritage and Upkeep of Listed Buildings***

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### **Mercy Archives**

The purpose of the archives service in the province is to ensure that a record of the life of the sisters in the province, their mission and ministries is preserved. The Mercy Story links into the Irish social history of the last 200 years particularly in the areas of education, nursing, religious education, prison chaplaincy and social work with a particular focus on the disadvantaged in society. One member of the Charity works in the provincial archives office. Throughout the province several members help through the writing of annals, personal memoirs, oral recordings and the collection of archival material. Other members work on specific projects for example researching and writing up the history of particular foundations, events or ministries.

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## **Provincial Heritage Centre, Charleville, Co. Cork**

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

### **A Visit to the Heritage Centre**

*"I am fortunate to be part of a recently formed group of inspirational people. The Encountering Mercy Group explores the reality of living the values of Catherine McAuley as they apply in current times. This journey of enlightenment led us to spend a very enjoyable few hours in Charleville Heritage Centre, on June 6<sup>th</sup> 2022*



**Provincial Heritage Centre**

*It was difficult to explain to my children and grandchildren what I hoped to achieve by this visit. In truth, I didn't know, until I went there.*

*We had a joyous afternoon. A face-to-face meeting allowed for a more familiar and friendly encounter than Zoom had generated in previous meetings. Sr. Bernadette's welcome was warm and heartfelt. She had planned well. Refreshments were followed by a short prayer service on the theme of Spirit. This set the tone for the evening. Catherine McAuley's reflections and thoughts are aspirational and challenging, yet positive and reassuring. Mercy Sisters generously responded to requests for help to educate the poor in several towns in Ireland and abroad.*

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*Charleville Heritage Centre is a museum which documents in a lively way, the extraordinary lives of service, mission, faith and love: all lived under the banner of Mercy. Their focus was education in the broadest sense of the word. Sisters imparted appropriate skills to their students including intricate lace work, needlework, woodwork, anything which would empower their charges. Their faith was evident in their lives and their work. The museum contains several unique and some unexpected examples of vestments, statues, religious habits, rule books and mementos from convents which are now closed. Sr Bernadette's guided tour is not to be missed, as she is the best possible presenter to bring the past to life in an empathetic humorous and interesting manner.  
Mary O'Sullivan (Encountering Mercy Group)*

The province owns six buildings listed on the planning authority's Record of Protected Structures (RPS). Protected structures are considered to be of specific interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical importance to society. Three convents located in Co Cork, and one in each of counties Kerry, Kilkenny and Waterford are listed buildings which the charity is obliged to maintain. The Charity is legally required to ensure that these structures do not become endangered through neglect, decay, damage or harm. Certain repair works that are normally routine on a building, may require planning permission on a protected structure. Additional expenditure is incurred in sourcing expertise and materials for the renovation of listed buildings. During 2022 the Sisters of Mercy Southern Province incurred a cost of €140,397.88 in respect of these protected structures and heritage assets. This cost included areas such as insurance, maintenance, professional fees, general upkeep and depreciation.

Cemeteries are also a focus of care. The Charity aims to keep all cemeteries under its jurisdiction in good condition.

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**Convent of Mercy, Charleville**

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***D. Positive Impact Investing***

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

While avoiding harmful activities is important, we believe that it is also 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.

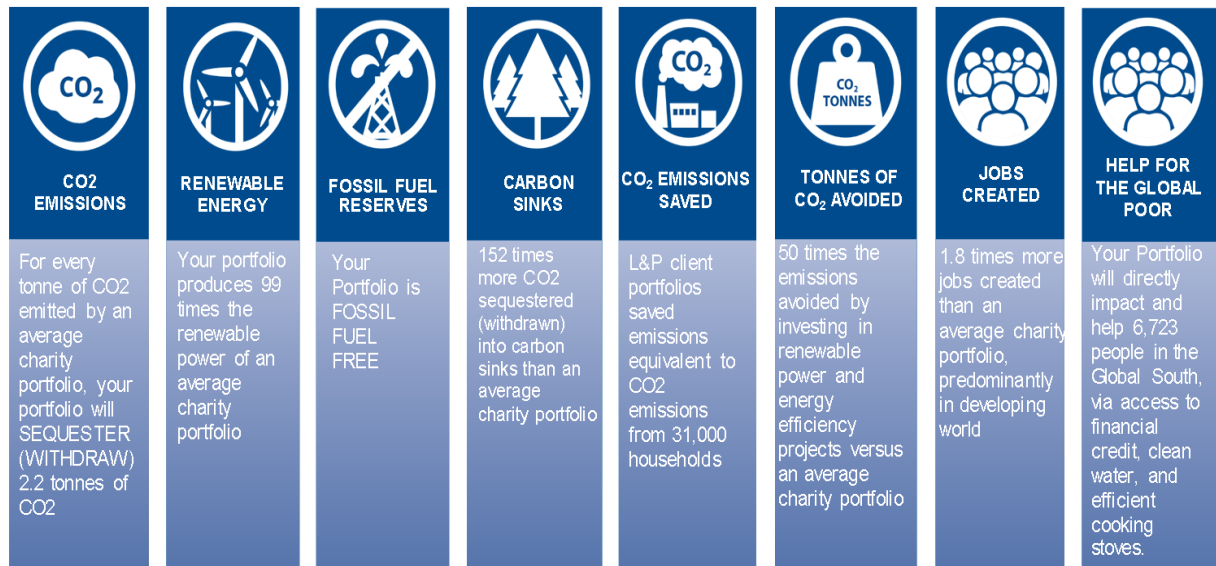
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We assess these positive impacts under a number of headings that we believe are important measures of how our investments are positively affecting the world around us.

Below are some of the positive impacts achieved by the investment portfolio:



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

All of the investments within the Portfolio contribute towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs were developed and adopted by all member states of the United Nations to help achieve “a more sustainable future for all”. They represent a call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and promote prosperity and people’s wellbeing by 2030. They integrate and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

Achieving the SDGs on a global basis requires collaboration between governments, the private sector, civil society and citizens alike. The Portfolio plays a role in the realisation of the goals.



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## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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

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

A comprehensive Ethical and Positive Impact policy ensures the Portfolio remains consistent with our ethos. 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.

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We outline below some elements of a particularly important area in today's world, that of Environmental Impact, and how the Portfolio addresses the SDGs in this regard.

## 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.

The Portfolio in aggregate will sequester (withdraw) -2,569 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e from the atmosphere *per annum* while an unscreened portfolio of the same size would produce 1,533 tonnes. We believe that these extremely strong carbon emission statistics makes the Portfolio part of the solution to climate change, rather than part of the problem.

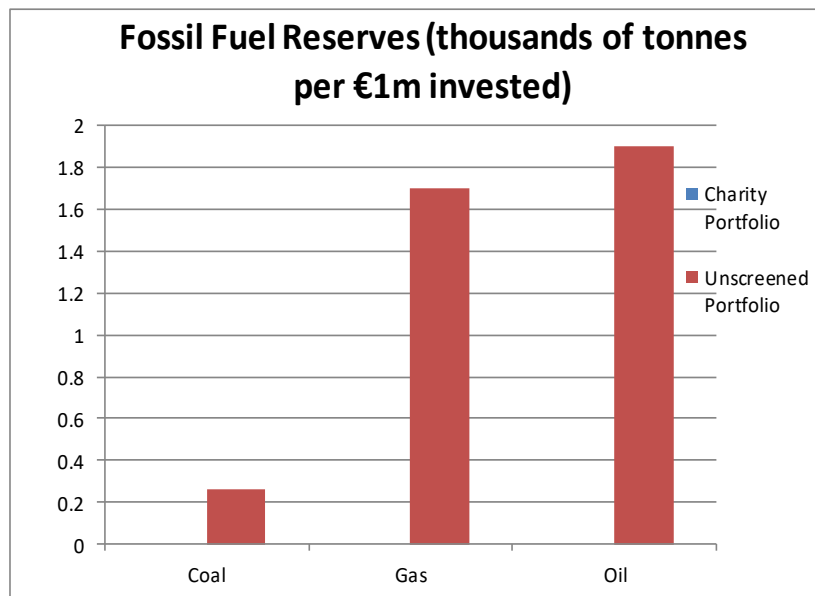
### Fossil Fuel Reserves

This section addresses the level of exposure 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

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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. **Our Portfolio holds no fossil fuel reserves, as shown in the chart below.**



***Chart showing our Portfolio holds no fossil fuel reserves (no blue bar)***

### ***Renewable Energy***

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 2022, the Portfolio avoided the release of almost 2,623 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. This is equivalent to:

- Removing 567 cars from the roads every year
- 6,033 barrels of oil saved
- 2,185 acres of pine forest absorbing CO<sub>2</sub> for one year
- 289 round trips around the world by one typical passenger car (travelling at the equator).

In terms of renewable energy produced, the Portfolio produced 92 MWh in 2022, enough energy to power 723 homes.

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### **Financial Review**

#### **Results for the year**

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

#### **Income - where our income came from**

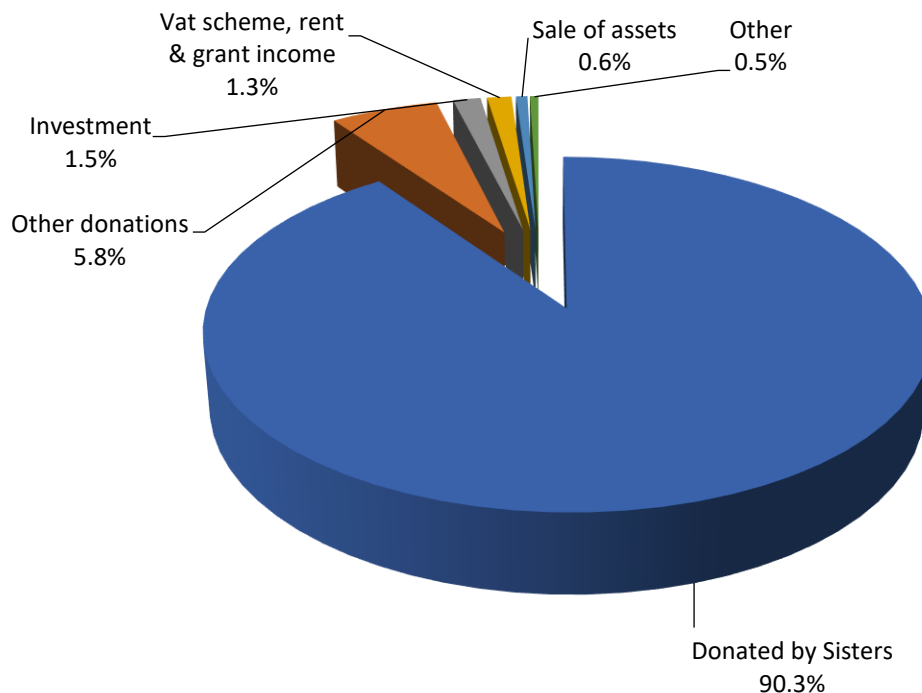
Income for the year totalled €9,178,151:

- Donations & Legacies income of €8,820,163: the vast majority of this, €8,284,146, was the pension, salary and stipend income earned by the members of the Sisters of Mercy Southern Province, and donated to the Charity. The balance, €536,017, was a mixture of income received under the Charitable Donations Scheme, third party legacies, bequests, gifts, and insurance refunds and claims received.
- Investment Income of €137,988: was the income earned on the Charity's investment portfolio and bank interest.
- Charitable activities of €121,004: was the refund received under the Charity Vat Compensation Scheme, rental income and grant income received.
- Surplus on sale of assets of €56,900: was the surplus received on the sale of property
- Other of €42,096: was other miscellaneous income received.

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## Breakdown of Income



## Expenditure - where the money is spent

Total expenditure for the year was €11,905,505.

Charitable Activities - of the total, €11,796,738 or 99%, was spent on Charitable Activities:

- Congregational Living, the Advancement of Religion, €3,946,599: 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

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includes the provision of living accommodation, the upkeep, up-skilling and retraining of the members of the province so that they will be able to continue in their service to the public

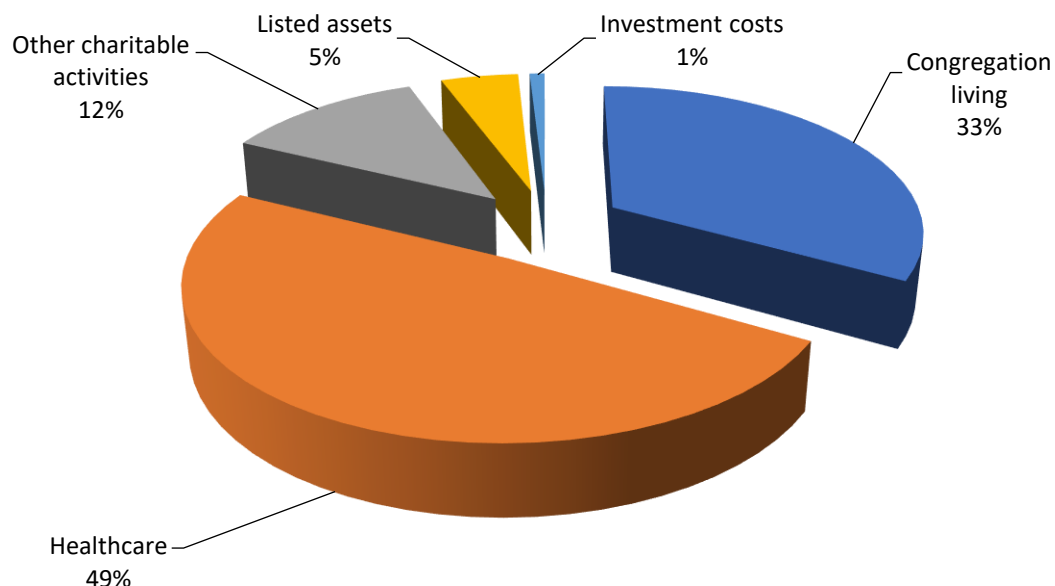
- Healthcare and the Compassionate Care of the Sick and Those in Need, €5,840,885: Catherine McAuley generated in her Sisters a deep concern and compassion for the sick and dying and today, over 180 years later, wellbeing activities, healthcare, care of the dying and the bereaved still engage many of 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 in need of care.
- Relief of Poverty, Promotion of Education, Justice and Other Charitable Activities, €1,444,245: this includes expenditure on a number of headings, including Promotion of all Aspects of Education, Justice, Peace & Reconciliation, Overseas Development and Support, Pastoral and Social Care and Development.
- Heritage and Upkeep of Listed Assets, €565,009: the Charity owns a number of protected structures. The structures are typically buildings that are listed on planning authority's Record of Protected Structures (RPS). By including them in the RPS, the importance of these structures is recognised; they are legally protected from harm and all future changes to the structure are controlled and managed through the development control process. The Charity is legally required to make sure that these structures do not become endangered through neglect, decay, damage or harm.

Investment costs – in the year, investment costs totalled €108,767.

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## Breakdown of Expenditure



### Net Movement in Funds

Net expenditure for the year, therefore, was €2,727,354. This was before the loss on investment assets, which when taken into account results in a net decrease in funds in the year of €3,169,866.

### Investments

At 31 December 2022, the Charity had investments of €19.8m. 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. L&P (Cantor Fitzgerald Ireland) act as a Discretionary Investment Manager.

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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 €33.8m. Of this, €0.5m is restricted for specific purposes - see Financial Statements note 20. Of the balance, €13.5m is represented by properties and other tangible fixed assets essential for the running of the Charity. The Trustees have designated another €19.0m to provide for Mission and Ministry works and Congregational Living needs. Details are given in note 21 of these Financial Statements. The Trustees will continue to review and reassess these designations on an on-going basis.

Un-designated or general funds amount to €0.5m. This equates to less than 1 month of unrestricted charitable expenditure. The Trustees would like this to be higher as, given the nature of the Charity's work and its commitments, they consider the level of free reserves should be equal to approximately 6 to 12 months' expenditure.

### **Review of the Charity's Objectives for 2022**

<b>Objectives Set</b>	<b>Progress Review</b>
<b>Continue its commitment to the ongoing care of the sisters in the province</b>	On going



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<b>Facilitate and support the sisters in resuming and undertaking the Charity's activities post pandemic.</b>	Ongoing. See Activities and Achievements throughout this report
<b>Work in collaboration with other groups and charities in responding to global and local needs</b>	Ongoing
<b>Resource cluster leaders to exercise leadership while working with management companies in the assisted living houses.</b>	Ongoing
<b>Organise stewardship information meetings for the province on: Resources, Charity Regulator Requirements and Trustee Reporting</b>	Two days on Stewardship held in Mallow and Waterford in May 2022
<b>Carry out Visitation of all clusters and mission area in the Autumn of 2022</b>	Completed
<b>Actively collaborate with other Mercy Provinces and US Region in the restructuring of governance.</b>	Awaiting response from Holy See to decisions made in June 2022
<b>Maintain the safeguarding structures at national and provincial level</b>	Ongoing

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<b>Facilitate training for safeguarding representatives and cluster leaders regarding their roles in carrying out audits and in implementing the Adult Safeguarding Policy.</b>	Completed September /October 2022
<b>Progress the transfer of the remaining primary schools to the dioceses across the Southern Province</b>	Ongoing
<b>Progress the transfer of the secondary schools to EDUCENA – Dungarvan, Waterford, Clonakilty, Enniscorthy and two in Cork City.</b>	Almost complete
<b>Explore the possibility of how we could respond to Pope Francis’ invitation to create a culture of Mercy and a culture of encounter.</b>	New group “Encountering Mercy” set up to explore ways of living the Mercy Charism in modern times.

**Charity Objectives for 2023**

The Trustees of the Charity will actively engage in their roles and responsibilities (availing of training when necessary) in undertaking the administration of the Charity.

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The Charity will:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Continue its commitment to the ongoing care of all sisters in the province whether they live independently, in communities or require full time care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Work collaboratively with other groups and agencies in responding to global and local needs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Modify the configuration of clusters and the model of cluster leadership in line with demographic changes in the Charity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Work with and promote processes emanating from MIA, CLT, Pathways Group in the furtherance of the Mercy Mission.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Continue the implementation of strategic direction set in 2019 Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy Southern Province</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Maintain the safeguarding structures at national and provincial level.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Facilitate and support the sisters in undertaking the activities of the charity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Continue to update the content and layout of the website</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Collaborate with the other provinces and region of the Congregation to implement the Holy See's response to the proposed changes to our structure and Constitution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Progress the transfer of trusteeship of the primary schools to the dioceses of Cork and Ross, Cloyne, Waterford and Lismore, Ferns and Ossory.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Collaborate with Mercy Global Action and other Congregations in raising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Progress the transfer of the secondary schools to Educena – Waterford and Dungarvan.</li> </ul>

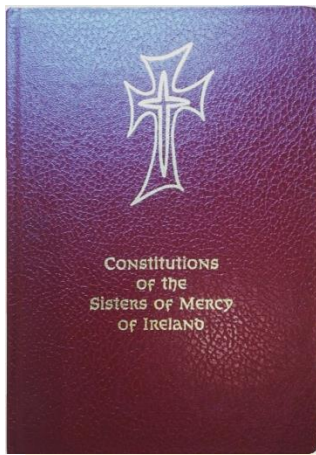
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awareness on areas of eco-justice, social justice and climate change.	
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## STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

### Nature of Governing Document



The governing instrument of the Southern Province is the *Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy* which was adopted by the General Chapter of the Congregation in August 1994 and approved by the *Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life* (Rome) in April 1995. The province is one of four provinces in Ireland and is an unincorporated association.

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

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### **Method Adopted for Appointing Trustees (Provincial Leadership Team)**

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

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

### **Organisational Structure & Decision Making**

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

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

There are systems of accountability operational throughout the province. At the six yearly Chapter meeting General and Financial Reports are given to the members. The Provincial Treasurer is appointed by the Provincial Leader with the consent of her team. The Provincial Treasurer administers the affairs of the province under the

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direction of the Provincial Leader and her Team. The majority of the income of the Charity comes from sisters' salaries, stipends and pensions, sale of property and income from investments. The salary, stipend and pension income is voluntarily donated to a common fund, administered through the Provincial Stewardship Office. Sale of properties and income from investment provide additional income.

### **Risk Management**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

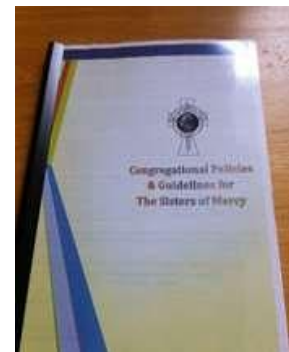
- obtaining appropriate professional advice,
- monitoring, and where appropriate insuring the operational and business risks faced by the charity, and
- developing policies, procedures, systems and controls.

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

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

### **Policies**

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



Since the mid 1990's the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy has had a safeguarding policy which has been revised regularly. The policy aims to encourage adequate awareness and best practice among all members of the Congregation, and those working for them, to ensure that all children and vulnerable adults are safeguarded from abuse of any kind. The Charity is committed to a culture of safeguarding and to ensuring compliance with best practice in this area. The Trustees are proactive in complying with civil and ecclesiastical requirements for safeguarding in the Republic of Ireland. The Trustees review annually the implementation of its Safeguarding Policy and procedures.

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The Charity has further policies and guidelines on Stewardship, Health and Safety, Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons (still in draft form), Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption.

### **Property**

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

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

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

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

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

Membership of the committee includes:

- Members of the Provincial Leadership Team
- Property Coordinator
- Provincial Treasurer
- Provincial Financial Controller
- Property, legal, financial and technical advisors.



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

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

### **COMPANIES**

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

Mercy Care South

Huruma CLG T/A Wellsprings

Tabor Lodge Addiction and Housing Services CLG Welcome

Immigrant Centre CLG T/A Welcome English.

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

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

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

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**Appreciation**

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

Approved by the Trustees:

September 2023

Sr. Eileen O'Flynn

Sr. Bríd Biggane

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Provincial Leader

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Provincial Leadership Team Member